

Guidance for full applications

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I. Introduction

At Versus Arthritis, we invest in breakthrough treatments, the best information and vital support for everyone affected by arthritis. We believe that by harnessing the power of exceptional science we can overcome the pain, isolation and fatigue arthritis causes, making everyday life better for all 10 million people with arthritis in the UK. Our remit covers all conditions which affect the joints, bones and muscles, including osteoarthritis, rheumatoid arthritis, back pain and osteoporosis. We fund research into the prevention, cause, treatment and cure of arthritis and we provide information on how to maintain healthy joints and bones, and how to live well with arthritis.

Arthritis (the term representing a range of conditions that affect muscles, bones and joints) affects approximately 10 million people across the UK.

- More than 1 in 6 people of all ages struggle with the pain and disability of arthritis every day
- Arthritis is the biggest cause of pain and disability in the UK
- Musculoskeletal conditions account for one in five GP consultations, rising to a third of all in the over 50s.

II. 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.

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.

III. How to apply

All applications for Arthritis UK 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 Research & Programmes Directorate at research@versusarthritis.org or phone us on 0300 7900 403.

IV. Note on the 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 [Patient Insight Partners](#). They assess the quality of the patient involvement, the relevance to the charity and potential for patient benefit. The Lay abstract, Application details and Strategic focus sections should be written in appropriate 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

V. Guidance for completion of the full application form

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

Application Summary

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

Organisation: Enter the name of organisation

Profession and Relevant professional body: Enter as applicable

Proposed duration: The overall duration should include the start-up time described above and a realistic estimate of how long the research will take, taking into account realistic and feasible recruitment estimates. It should also include sufficient time at the end of the study for full analysis and reporting of the data

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

Scientific Synopsis: Provide a brief technical account of the proposed research activity including background, focus and objectives, details of the proposed techniques and exploitation of the research results.

Abstract (written in lay language): This should outline: 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 section should be completed in lay language.

Application details (project details in lay language)

This section will be reviewed by lay experts, please complete this section in a lay language. Further guidance on writing for a lay audience is provided above.

If attaching a figure in the attachments section, please ensure you include a figure legend within the text here to reference the figure.

Background: Provide a non-technical summary of background information and research in support of the application in light of the question and approach to be addressed. It should outline past and current research, including that funded by Versus Arthritis (formerly Arthritis Research UK), and highlighting the applicants' own contribution.

Aims and purpose: What are the questions you hope to answer and why?

Proposed plan: Give a brief overview of how you intend to answer your research question(s), including details of what methods of recruitment or experimental models you will use (e.g. human cells, animal models, clinical samples, patient and/or education research studies) and how the research will be managed.

Importance and novelty of the application: Explain why this particular study is important and how this research is different to what has been done before by your research group and others?

Facilities: Describe the facilities available to support delivery of the project.

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.

Risk and mitigation strategies: Discuss any potential risks to the award and highlight mitigation strategies.

Intellectual Property (IP): If appropriate, please provide information on whether the proposal is likely to produce new IP, how the new IP will be managed and if there is existing IP associated with the proposal

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 Research & Programmes Directorate at research@versusarthritis.org

Industrial Support: Indicate if the application involves any external commercial organisation (including collaborations and donations). If the proposal includes industrial support use the additional page to provide further details of the commercial partner. Please refer to our [industrial support policy](#) and provide contact details, details of the support/collaboration and any conflicts of interest.

Strategic Focus

This section will be reviewed by lay and scientific experts, please complete this section in a lay language. Further guidance on writing for a lay audience is provided above.

Explain how people with arthritis have inputted and informed this application: Please explain (a) how you have involved patients in developing this application, and (b) how patients will be involved in steering and implementing the research should your application be successful. 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

<http://www.arthritisresearchuk.org/patientinsight>

<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/>

If awarded, explain how this application will have an impact and contribute to achieving the strategic focus of the charity: Versus Arthritis exists to prevent the onset of arthritis, develop a cure for arthritis and transform the lives of those living with arthritis by building, applying and sharing knowledge. We want to improve the quality of life of people with arthritis so those seeking help from Versus Arthritis are enabled to make informed choices and are supported to realise their decisions and so they can say “I am in control, independent and recognised”. Use this section to explain how this research will have an impact on and contribute to achieving the charity’s mission and strategic focus.

If awarded, what impact and potential benefits will this application 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, for example in basic laboratory research, 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

Application Focus (project details in technical language)

This section will be reviewed by scientific experts, please complete this section in technical language. If attaching a figure in the attachments section, please ensure you include a figure legend within the text here to reference the figure.

PLEASE FOLLOW THIS GUIDANCE IF SUBMITTING TO THE DISEASE SUBCOMMITTEE

Scientific background: Briefly and clearly explain the context of your research. This should include the disease/area and its clinical and/or patient impact, the particular area(s) that your research seeks to address, and the need for further understanding. Also include past and current research, including that funded by Versus Arthritis and include the applicants' own contribution to this.

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.

Hypothesis and aims: State the primary hypothesis and outline the aims and objectives of the research.

Programme of work and scientific procedures: Outline the proposed programme of work to include clear work packages, milestones and methodology. Please include the following subheadings where applicable:

- **Research design:** Provide a detailed account of the research methodology. This should include a statistical plan, measures to reduce bias, justification for the proposed sampling strategies, sample size calculation, methods of data collection, analysis and outcome measures. The plan should be separated into work packages where appropriate.
- **Data management:** Please describe the approach for data management to include making the data discoverable and the process for data sharing

Research management: Outline the arrangements for the management of the research. This should include an outline of the research team, expertise and track record across the full range of relevant disciplines. A Gantt chart should be submitted with this using the attach documents at the end of the application form.

PLEASE FOLLOW THIS GUIDANCE IF SUBMITTING TO THE HEALTH SUBCOMMITTEE

Scientific background: Briefly and clearly explain the context of your research. This should include the disease/area and its clinical and/or patient impact, the particular area(s) that your research seeks to address, and the need for further understanding. Also include past and current research, including that funded by Versus Arthritis and include the applicants' own contribution to this.

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.

Research design: Provide a detailed account of the research methodology. This should be arranged under the following headings:

Hypothesis -The research should be hypothesis led and seek to answer a specific question. Outline clearly the full and null hypotheses and specifically the question to be addressed.

Planned inclusion/exclusion criteria - List the inclusion and exclusion criteria for the research, justifying with justification for this.

Method of allocating participants to groups - Describe how participants will be allocated to groups. If this is by randomization, give details of the randomization technique.

Planned recruitment rate - Describe how recruitment will be organised and over what time period. Include evidence that the planned recruitment rate is achievable and from where the potential pool of patients is to be taken.

Methods of protecting against potential sources of bias - Discuss what methods will be used to protect against bias in the study, for example blinding and justify these methods. If the study is not to be blinded please explain the exact rationale behind this.

Primary and secondary outcome measures - Give details of 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.

Sample size calculation - State the sample size for the research, providing a detailed description of how the sample size has been calculated, including details of which outcome measure this has been based on and give the event rates, means and standard deviations as appropriate.

Statistical analysis - Summarise the statistical analysis plan for the chosen design, highlighting statistical technique to be used, sub-group analysis if appropriate and proposed frequency of analysis.

Economic evaluation -Provide a detailed account of any economic evaluation included in the research where applicable. This should be arranged under the following headings:

How economic data will be collected - Give details of how the economic data will be collected.

Economic evaluation methodology - Provide details about the economic evaluation methodology, for any proposed health economic component of the study.

Quality of life measurement - Provide details of how quality of life will be measured including justification of measurement tools to be used.

Research Management -Outline the arrangements for the management of the research. This should include 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 analysis. Additionally, provide details of research team, expertise and track record across the full range of relevant disciplines and the team's track record of working with policymakers and/or implementing research findings into practice.

Lead Clinical Research Network - Indicate that the lead CRN or equivalent has been notified of the study and detail what NHS Support Costs have they either undertaken to provide or been made

aware are required, if the Research Costs are funded. These costs should be detailed in the spreadsheet available in the Finance Section.

The identified NHS Support activities and costs should be outlined; investigators, coordinators and trial units should engage the relevant CRN at an early stage to secure commitment to these activities. These costs should also be detailed in the costing spreadsheet

Treatment costs and excess treatment costs Provide a breakdown of the Treatment Costs and Excess Treatment Costs for this study. These costs should be detailed in the spreadsheet available in the Finance Section.

Describe the tests and treatments which comprise current standard practice. Describe treatments in the control and experimental arms of the study if applicable. Treatment Costs are the patient care costs which would continue to be incurred if the patient care service in question continued to be provided after the R&D activity had stopped. The difference between the total Treatment Costs and the costs of the standard treatment (if any) are called Excess Treatment Costs (ETCs). If you believe that there is no ETC implications linked to this study then please explain your reasons behind this.

For further details, please see <https://www.england.nhs.uk/ourwork/research/etc/>

Finance and costs

Finance summary: Please complete the relevant financial detail within each of the following categories:

- Staff members (salaries)
- Animals (Disease only)
- Expenses/consumables (total)
- Apparatus/Equipment (total)

Attributing the costs of health and social care Research and Development (AcoRD)

Applications that propose research conducted with human subjects within a health or social care setting should be formulated in line with Department of Health Guidance "[Attributing the costs of health and social care Research & Development \(AcoRD\)](#)". Versus Arthritis will only fund Directly Incurred Research Costs and applicants should ensure that they have consulted their local NIHR CRN, where appropriate, to discuss NHS Support Costs and NHS Trust Management to discuss Treatment Costs before submission.

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 at 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
- The stipend for a PhD studentship can be applied for within schemes where stated in the call document
- Training and supervision of staff costs by non-tenured applicants within the project must be justified
- Costs for the purchase and maintenance of laboratory animals can be applied for. Studies involving animals must provide adequate details on the number, species, strain and associated costs of animals to be used at full application stage
- Fully justified items of equipment of up to £30,000 can be requested, requests for items of equipment included in applications with a cost greater than £5,000 must be supported by an estimate at full application stage
- Access charges for use of specialist equipment may be applied for within expenses
- 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
- Student tuition fees aren't provided on grants unless it's specifically stated that these can be applied for in the call document
- Personal license fees and home office license
- Good clinical practice (GCP) training
- Funding to provide maintenance of equipment
- Office stationery costs unless required for the project and justified accordingly

- Indemnity insurance
- 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

Ethics

Only complete this section if applicable to your application.

The [Department of Health](#) requires that research involving patients, service users, care professionals or volunteers, or their organs, tissue or data, is reviewed independently by a Research Ethics Committee (REC) to ensure it meets ethical standards (Favourable Ethical Opinion).

Please tick the box if Favourable Ethical Opinion is required for this research from an NHS Research Ethics Committee.

If Favourable Ethical Opinion is not required please enter justification for not needing it.

If Favourable Ethical Opinion is required please tick the box if it is already in place for this research and attach the final letter from the REC in the attachment section.

If Favourable Ethical Opinion is required but not yet in place, please provide the approximate date Favourable Ethical Opinion will be applied for.

Animal ethics

Only complete this section if applicable to your application.

Versus Arthritis is committed to the principles of reduction, replacement and refinement in animal studies. Before completing this section please read our policy on [animal research](#).

Versus Arthritis is a member of the Association of Medical Research Charities and signs up to their position on animal research (<http://www.amrc.org.uk/our-work/animal-research>).

Please tick the box if the project involves the use of experimental animals or other organisms covered by the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act.

Select the maximum severity of the procedures involved.

Indicate if the project involves a protected species (non-human primate, cats, dogs or equidae).

Indicate if the relevant Home Office project and personal licences have been obtained.

If you do not hold the relevant Home Office licence, please state when you expect to obtain them.

Justification for the use of animals: Please justify the use of animals, the species and techniques proposed and the number of animals to be used per experiment. Please include details of sample size calculations and statistical advice sought for the number of animals required to reach statistical significance.

There should be sufficient information to allow for a robust review of any applications involving animals. Further guidance is available from the National Centre for the Replacement, Refinement and Reduction of Animals in Research (NC3Rs) <http://www.nc3rs.org.uk/responsibility-use-animals-bioscience-research>, including an online experimental design assistant to guide researchers through the design of animal experiments: <http://www.nc3rs.org.uk/experimental-design-assistant-eda>.

Replacement, reduction and refinement (3Rs) of animal experiments: Indicate if the proposed research lead to the advancement of the 3Rs (replacement, refinement or reduction in the use of animals) and how it will do this. Further information on the 3Rs is available from the National Centre for the Replacement, Refinement and Reduction of Animals in Research (NC3Rs) <https://www.nc3rs.org.uk/the-3rs>.

Lead applicant

For further information on grant roles please see

<http://www.arthritisresearchuk.org/research/information-for-applicants/applying-for-a-grant/roles.aspx>

The lead applicant is the individual who will lead the work on the grant 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 GrantTracker Versus Arthritis homepage.

All details will be automatically populated from the “Manage my Details” section. It is important that this is kept up to date.

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: <http://www.arthritisresearchuk.org/research/information-for-applicants/applying-for-a-grant/how-to-apply.aspx>

If you wish to add a co-applicant that is based outside the UK please contact Versus Arthritis' research department.

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

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

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.

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.

Collaborations

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 who are not co-applicants are required to provide a letter of support with the application.

Administrators

Pre-award administrators: Please enter all of the administrators required for this application. Administrators can access and edit the application form, however, their details will not appear explicitly on the completed form.

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. A workflow diagram can be found [here](#).

Time Allocation

Enter the amount of time, in hours per week, intended to be spent by each applicant on the project being applied for.

References

Detail all references (citing all authors) that are of interest for this application.

Award Information

List all current awards held by the co-applicants (excluding any from Arthritis Research UK/ Versus Arthritis).

Those on the Lead Applicant's CV will be added automatically. Please note that we only require one entry per award, where awards are held by more than one applicant please enter the names of all the award holders listing the PI first.

Arthritis Research UK /Versus Arthritis Awards

List each Arthritis Research UK/Versus Arthritis award held by the co-applicant(s) within the past five years. Award information will automatically populate from the Lead Applicant's CV in the PDF of your

application; it is therefore unnecessary to include this information here. Please note that we only require one entry per award, where awards are held by more than one applicant please enter the names of all the award holders listing the PI first.

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 combined file size cannot be more than 10MB.

Attachments will either be appended to the PDF or they will be referenced from the PDF and included as separate files according to the following rules:

- Image files (JPG and GIF format) will be appended within the PDF.
- For Microsoft Word files, either append them or include them as separate files, by default they will be appended. (Please note: Docx files are not currently supported for embedding and will be included as separate files).
- Excel and other file types (e.g. PDF, PPT) will be included as separate files and listed in an appendix.

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 indicate if the main focus of your research is the education of health professionals or the public. Please also select up to 3 disease categories that your research aligns to.

Research Focus

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 indicate if the main focus of your research is adult or paediatric disease, if your focus covers both please select both.

Application 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 up to 3 research categories.

Methods Used

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 up to 4 research methods and techniques.

Validation and summary

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

1. *Select Validate form*

This will check that you have completed all sections within the application. Also, that your co-applicants have confirmed and approved their role(s).

2. *Click Save and close*

After completing these steps you will be taken to the details page of your application. The submit application button on the right-hand side of the page should be available.

3. *Click Submit*

Co applicants must approve their involvement before an application can be submitted. Once you have submitted your application an automated email will be sent firstly to your research or 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 on the outline deadline date.

4. *Acknowledgement*

An automated email will be dispatched containing an acknowledgement that the application has been received. If you are experiencing difficulties submitting your application, please contact us on 0300 7900 403, allowing for sufficient time prior to the deadline.