

Guidance for outline 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 a 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.

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.

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.

Previously submitted applications

Applicants must contact the Research Team before submitting a similar application that has been previously submitted to Versus Arthritis or elsewhere. Please [email](#) a covering letter detailing the original proposal, its outcome and how the revised application has changed from the original submission before submitting your proposal. This must be no longer than one side of A4.

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 outline application form

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

Project Summary

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

Lay title: This should be short and descriptive of the project

Organisation: Enter the name of organisation

Proposed start date: 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. These should not be underestimated and can take up to 12 months from the funding decision.

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

Lay project details

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.

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

Hypothesis and aims: What are the questions you hope to answer and why?

Project 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).

Public and patient involvement (PPI): Explain how people with arthritis have been/will be involved in the research cycle. This could include: identification and prioritisation of the research question; help design study protocols and patient information; inputting into the application and/or ethics approval; help carry out elements of the study, rather than simply participating as a subject; evaluating the research findings; and dissemination and implementation of outputs and outcomes.

Your patient involvement activities should be purpose-driven and benefit your research and people with arthritis alike. To find out more on how to plan and carry out meaningful patient involvement please use the links below or contact patientinsight@arthritisresearchuk.org.

<http://www.plainenglish.co.uk/free-guides.html>

<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/posttyperesource/where-and-how-to-involve-in-the-research-cycle/>

Strategic importance and novelty:

- a. Explain how your application meets the aims of this particular call and the charity's overall mission and strategic focus
- b. Explain why this particular study is important and the unmet needs it will address. How did you determine that your study addresses an unmet need? And what is different to what has been done before by your research group or others.

Anticipated project outcomes: Clearly describe the anticipated outcomes of the project and why these are important indicators of success.

Impact: Clearly describe how the results of this project will impact on people with arthritis and

Scientific project details

This section will be reviewed by scientific experts, please complete this section in technical language.

If attaching a figure, please ensure you include a figure legend within the text.

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: Outline the proposed programme of work to include clear work packages, milestones and methodology. Include details of methodological support such as statistics, epidemiological or health economics as appropriate. 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. Where complex methodology is necessary for a clinical study or healthcare development study, the expectation is that a Clinical Trials Unit is already involved in the development of the application and be represented by a named co-applicant.
- **Economic evaluation:** If applicable, provide a detailed account of any economic evaluation included in the research. This should include data collection methods, evaluation methodology and quality of life measurement.
- **Data management:** Details are not required at the outline stage, this will be required at full application stage.

For research involving human subjects: Applicants are advised to contact their lead CRN or equivalent to notify of this proposal and engage with them for commitment to the provision of agreed NHS service support costs that will be sought if the research costs are funded.

For research involving animals: 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>).

- Replacement, reduction and refinement (3Rs) of animal experiments. Versus Arthritis is committed to the principles of the 3Rs in animal studies. For further information, please read our policy on animal research: <http://www.arthritisresearchuk.org/research/research-funding-and-policy/our-research-policies/animal-research-policy.aspx>
- Experimental design, avoidance of bias and statistical considerations. 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>

Key resources, facilities and dependant elements: Describe the resources and facilities available to support the delivery of the programme of work. Please include any dependent collaborations or commercial support and for clinical and applied research describe the clinical trial unit relationship (if appropriate).

Intellectual property (IP): If appropriate, please provide information on the IP potential of your research, if there is any existing IP associated with your project and how this 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.

Previous submission: Applicants must contact the Research Team before submitting a similar application that has been previously submitted to Versus Arthritis or elsewhere. Please [email](#) a covering letter detailing the original proposal, its outcome and how the revised application has changed from the original submission before submitting your proposal. This must be no longer than one side of A4.

Research management: If the applications has been previously submitted to Versus Arthritis or elsewhere, give brief details and expected outcome dates if applicable. Please also provide any information about how any issues within the original application have been addressed in line with rejection feedback.

Lead applicant and Lead applicant CV

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.

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

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](#).

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.

Indicative Finance

Provide a list all the posts that you would intend to include for support in a full application. We require job titles only, i.e., post-doctoral research assistant, statistician, etc. not named individuals.

Estimate of support required: Provide an estimate of the costs of the proposed research. This need not be calculated precisely at this stage; the full application will be expected to fall within +/- 20% of this estimate. Summary amounts should be indicated for each of the following categories as relevant:

- Salaries (total)
- Animals (total)
- Expenses/consumables (total)
- Apparatus/Equipment (total)
- Service support costs (total)
- Treatment and service support cost should be (total) – should be completed where applicable as per the guidance below

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

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.

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.