



SMALL GRANT PROGRAM – Career Development Award

PURPOSE

To encourage PhD equivalent post-professionally trained Physical Therapists to pursue innovative research in Orthopedics. This award is designed to protect time/ effort for a post-doctoral research position /fellowship with an identified mentor. Individuals in their last year of doctoral training or first year of a post-doctoral fellowship are eligible to apply.

The award would support structured research training for two years in the field of orthopedics. Specifically, it would provide salary support for one year with a formal review for the second year of funding. The goal of funding at this level is to facilitate the transition of clinician- scientists from PhD training to a post-doctoral fellowship. This would allow them to embark on investigator-initiated research projects and training. Through this award, the APTA Orthopedics would provide a means to ensure qualified, highly-trained clinician-scientists in the field of orthopedics.

Should the trainee transition to a faculty position in the second year of the award, the trainee can request the continuation of funding for the first year of the faculty position. The same eligibility criteria apply for this transition period to a faculty position, as defined below. This is not guaranteed and requires approval by APTA Orthopedics.

Award amount: One award funded September 15th every other year for a total of \$50,000, with a maximum of \$25,000 each year.

ELIGIBILITY

1. Final year of PhD or equivalent post-professional training, or in their first year of post-doctoral training with an identified mentor.
2. APTA and APTA Orthopedics member.
3. Letter of commitment from a mentor who will oversee their training in their post-doctoral fellowship.
4. Former or current principal investigators of national level career development awards (i.e. K level or higher, including institutional K) are NOT eligible to apply.
5. The applicant must provide evidence that they can commit to at least 50% of effort to research, career development, and/or other scholarly activities.
6. Applicants are not eligible to concurrently receive funding for a New Investigator or Unrestricted grant from the APTA Orthopedics small grant program.

REVIEW CRITERIA

1. The candidate and training (65%)
 - a. The applicant's background, training and potential to develop into a productive clinician-scientist.
 - b. The environment in which training will be conducted, specifically the mentor, the department, the available facilities, and the potential for collaboration.
 - c. The institutional commitment to protect the applicant's time for research and training.
2. The proposed science (35%)
 - a. Relevance of the proposed research plan to orthopedics and physical therapy
 - b. The proposed research project's scientific merit
 - c. Appropriateness of the proposed project as a mechanism for developing the applicant into an independent clinician scientist in the field of physical therapy

AWARD TERMS

- 1) Awardees must devote 50% full-time professional effort to research, career development, and other scholarly activities for each year of the award.
- 2) A minimum of 50% of the budget should be allocated to salary support of the fellow. 100% can be used for salary support, however, if funding is needed for the associated research, then up to 50% can be used for research related activities.
- 3) Should the awardee receive any of the awards listed in the Eligibility criteria during the award period, they must notify the APTA Orthopedics.
- 4) Awards are funded for two years. The second year is funded based on satisfactory performance on an annual progress report showing substantial accomplishment and progress towards benchmarks specified in the original application.
- 5) Award is paid directly to the sponsoring institution and disbursed in two installments. The award must be directly applied to the individual awardee's salary and/or research and educational costs as outlined in the approved budget.
- 6) Indirect costs are not allowed.
- 7) Purchase of computers is not an allowable budget item, unless strong support is provided that the workplace does not provide a suitable computer.
- 8) If the fellowship is funded, monies will be release only after evidence of approval from the investigator's Institutional Review Board.

APPLICATION OUTLINE

Applications must be submitted via the grants submission portal on the website. There is no Letter of Intent (LOI) submission required for the Career Development Award. All applicants invited to submit a full proposal that adheres to the format outlined below.

Career Development (5 pages total) 65%

- 1) Candidate background
 - a. Describe the candidate's commitment to an academic career as a clinician-scientist. Present evidence of the candidate's ability to interact and collaborate with other scientists. Describe prior training and how it relates to the objectives and long-term career plans of the candidate. Describe the candidate's research efforts to this point in his/her research career including any publications, prior research interests and experience. Provide evidence of the candidate's potential to develop into an independent investigator.
- 2) Career Goals and Objectives
 - a. Describe a plan that shows progression from previous research and training experiences to the proposed training. Justify the need for further career development to become an independent investigator.
- 3) Career Development/Training Activities in Award Period
 - a. Create a timeline for the career development plan
 - b. Classes and research aspects of the plan must be designed to develop necessary skills in the area of research relevant to career goals.
 - c. Describe professional responsibilities/activities and how these activities are related to career progression to achieve independence.
- 4) Mentoring Team
 - a. Describe the mentor or mentoring team that will oversee the proposed career development and research experience. The mentor(s) should be active investigators in the area of proposed research and committed both to the career development of the candidate and to the direct supervision of the candidate's research.

Research Design (3 pages total) 35%

1. Specific aims
2. Significance/Innovation
3. Approach including experimental design and methods
4. Future Directions

Milestones (1 page)

Milestones towards achieving career development goals should be included for the formal coursework, research project, and career development as outlined in the proposal. Examples include: timeline for research proposal, submission of abstracts and/or publications

Budget and Budget Justification

1. Broken down into Year 1 and Year 2
2. 50% of funds must be allocated to support awardee's salary
3. Remaining 50%

Mentor Letter of Support (2-page maximum)

The primary mentor must provide a letter of support detailing the following:

- 1) Details of previous experience as mentors
- 2) Features of their training program and the institutional environment
- 3) Financial and other resources available to support
- 4) Description of the mentorship plan
- 5) Roles of any additional mentors
- 6) Agreement to participate in the project
- 7) Descriptions of applicant's qualifications and track record of productivity
- 8) Letter of institutional support

Annual Progress report elements will be requested for each year and will include:

- 1) Milestones achieved (1 page)
 - a. Provide an update on your progress on the research and development towards becoming an independent investigator. Please include results of your publications and grants. If you anticipate transferring institutions, please include an update.
- 2) Updates on Mentor Statement (1 page)
 - a. Include an updated mentor statement. Your mentor should evaluate your progress thus far, and the likelihood of achieving independence in the next one to two years.

REVIEW PROCESS

The APTA Orthopedics Research Committee will review each proposal to determine if it meets the Career Development Award eligibility as described under Guidelines. All eligible applications will then be forwarded to the External Grant Review Committee that will review and rate each eligible application, using the criteria for review stated above. The highest rated applications will be selected for funding. All applicants will be notified of the results around June 15, 2026. Grants should indicate a start time no later than September 15th 2026.

SUBMISSION DEADLINES

The deadline for application submission is **March 15th, 2026.**