



SMALL GRANT PROGRAM - New Investigator Grant

PURPOSE

APTA Orthopedics supports its members by funding studies to systematically examine orthopedic practice issues. The purpose of this grant program is to address the urgent need for clinical research in orthopedic physical therapy.

TARGETED RECIPIENTS OF THE GRANT PROGRAM

The grant program is designed to provide funding to any APTA Orthopedic member who has resources to examine a well-defined clinical practice issue, but who needs some external funding to facilitate completion of the clinical research project.

GUIDELINES for PROJECT SPECIFIC GRANTS

Studies Eligible for Funding

Eligible studies will address one of the following research priority areas:

1. Determine the role and value of orthopedic physical therapy practice and services. Includes studies examining or comparing the effects of various orthopedic physical therapy (PT) treatments or orthopedic PT care models (e.g. concurrent treatments, group vs individualized therapy, virtual vs in-person) on patient-centered (e.g. QoL, physical function) and economic outcomes (e.g. cost, utilization).
2. Develop and/or evaluate novel treatment approaches, examination procedures or clinical prediction rules on a well-defined sample of patients with orthopedic conditions. Includes mechanistic studies that have a clear and direct impact on evaluation or treatment techniques used in orthopedic PT practice. Preference will be given to mechanistic studies using a cohort with a relevant orthopedic condition over those that only include uninjured individuals.
3. Evaluate the psychometric properties of patient-centered and performance-based outcome measures used in orthopedic PT practice; for newly developed tools or commonly used tools that lack sufficient supporting evidence.
4. Examine the incidence, prevalence, progression and/or development of body function and structural impairments, activity limitations, and participation restrictions associated with orthopedic conditions managed by PTs.
5. Examine access, needs, barriers and/or utilization of orthopedic PT across different patient populations.
6. Investigate orthopedic PT practice patterns and/or examine strategies to reduce unwarranted variation in orthopedic PT practice. Includes studies examining the implementation of evidence-based orthopedic PT approaches and assessing their impact on patient-centered (e.g. QoL, physical function) and economic outcomes (e.g. cost, utilization).

PI & Project Eligibility Criteria for New Investigator Grant:

1. Purpose: the grant should clearly address at least one of the areas described above for eligible studies.
2. Principal investigator (PI) must be a member of APTA Orthopedics and have a minimum of a BS in PT degree.
3. PI should be an early career investigator who has not received any Federal or National competitive funding (excluding grants or scholarships designed only for doctoral students, such as the PODS)
4. PI must not have received an APTA Orthopedics (previously AOPT) award in this category as PI or Co-I within the last five years.
5. Budget for proposed project must not exceed a total of \$30,000 over two years.

FUNDING

Individual grant applications are limited to a maximum 2- year period of funding, as described under each category. Applicants may request up to the maximum allowable over a 2-year period; however, applications for projects with smaller budgets are also encouraged. Projects with funding from other sources are also eligible for funding by the APTA Orthopedics; however, the applicant must justify the need for additional funding from the APTA Orthopedics and must provide assurances to avoid overlap in funding.

Allowable use of funds is specific as defined below:

- The grant may be used to purchase equipment, pay consultation fees, recruit patients or fund clinicians to collect data. The purchase of computers will not be acceptable for funding, unless strong support is provided that the workplace does not provide a suitable computer and if the computer is not purchased the study cannot be completed. Funds can be used for support personnel such as a data technician or research assistant.
- Salary support for the investigators (principal investigators and co-investigators) is allowed, but the total for the investigators cannot exceed 30% of the total funds (budget) requested. Funding to support travel to present study findings at conferences (including CSM) should not exceed 5% of the total budget.
- If the grant budget includes proposed in-kind services, letters from appropriate supervisors or clinical entities indicating the approval of in-kind services or percent effort of researcher / clinician must accompany the grant.
- There are no in-directs allowable for this grant mechanism.
- If the grant is funded, monies will be released only after evidence of approval from the investigator's Institutional Review Board for Biomedical Research. Monies will be distributed at two time-points: once at the beginning of the funding cycle and then at the midpoint of the funding cycle. Reporting of progress and budget will be required for midpoint release of funding and for approval of no-cost extensions.
- Any unused funds remaining upon completion of the project period must be relinquished back to APTA Orthopedics.

REQUIREMENTS IF FUNDED

Physical therapists receiving funding from this program will be expected to report their findings at a Combined Sections Meeting within 3 years of receipt of funding. Funds to travel to CSM must be included within the proposed budget. All abstracts and manuscripts that result from this funding must acknowledge APTA Orthopedics as a funding source and be reported to APTA Orthopedics.

PROJECT SPECIFIC GRANT APPLICATION FORMAT

All applications need to be submitted via the grants submission portal on the APTA Orthopedics website.

Applications will involve a two-step process: 1) Submission of a letter of intent (LOI) and 2), a full application. Submission of an LOI is mandatory to apply for funding. The LOI process will be used to facilitate timely identification of reviewers and to ensure that they address one of the stated research priority areas.

LOI Application will be submitted via the grants submission portal and must include:

1. Brief 1-page (or less) abstract/description of proposed study with specific aims.
2. Names of the PI(s) and Co-I(s).
3. Indication of the research priority areas the study will address.

Applicants who submit an LOI by the stated deadline will be notified within one week whether they have been approved to submit a full application. Approved applicants will receive a separate invitation link to the full application portal. Full applications should consist of the following documents:

1. Cover Sheet (available within the grants submission portal)
 - Title of the grant
 - Name and address of each PI and co-investigator
 - Dollar amount requested
 - Category of Funding (New investigator or Unrestricted)
 - Purpose/priority area that the grant addresses
 - Sponsored Programs official and signature
2. Table of Contents
3. Section 1: Abstract (1 page maximum). Include Background, Purpose, Design, Methods, Data Analysis, Significance
4. Sections 2 – 5: Research Plan (10 page maximum, include page numbers):
 - a. Section 2: Specific Aims and Hypotheses. State the purpose and priority area that the grant addresses in this section.
 - b. Section 3: Significance
 - c. Section 4: Innovation
 - d. Section 5: Approach. Include design, subjects, methods, variables, data analysis, power analysis, limitations, potential problems and risks in this section
5. Section 6: Bibliography
6. Section 7: Subject recruitment plan (also see Appendix G)
7. Section 8: Appendices
 - a. Appendix A: Timeline
 - b. Appendix B: Budget and Budget Justification. If you have a 2-year grant, your budget must be broken down into Year 1 and Year 2. (Carefully read the paragraph on funding above as it relates to allowable use offunds)

c. Appendix C: Biosketches and Role of each investigator

- i. Role of each investigator (limit to 1 page): List each investigator's name and indicate their role in the project.
- ii. Biosketches: Biosketches: Use the most recent NIH format and combine all biosketches into one PDF and upload. Biosketches should include 1) Name and Position Title, 2) Education / Training (Institution and Location, Degree, Year, Field of Study), 3) Personal Statement, 4) Positions and Honors, 5) Contributions to Science and 6) Research Support to include current/prior funding: agency, title of the project, a brief description of the project, amount of funding, percentage effort, year(s) of funding.

d. Appendix D: Facilities

- e. Appendix E: Include IRB Informed Consent that has been or will be submitted and/or the IRB approval letter. Whichever is available at the time of application. If there are multiple consent forms or IRB letters, combine them all into one PDF and upload.

- f. Appendix F: Other: Data collection forms, surveys, etc. (Combine into one PDF/document and upload)

- g. Appendix G: Letters of support from clinical partners and referring sources to support ability to recruit subjects (Combine into one PDF/document and upload)

- h. Appendix H: Previously funded by the APTA Orthopedics or other sources?

- i. Please submit as Appendix H, a brief 1-page summary to include the title of the funded project, date of funding and results of previous funding, and list the abstracts and publications as a direct result of funding.

- i. Appendix I: Resubmission. Was this grant previously submitted to the APTA Orthopedics?

- i. Please submit Appendix I: Resubmission. This section is limited to 2 pages and should address the major differences between the current and previous grant application. It should address the reviewer's comments and clearly identify how these comments were addressed in the current grant application. Do not use text shading or any indication in the grant application as to the changes made, but rather indicate section and page as needed where previous review comments were addressed.

FORMATTING

When formatting the application, margins must be 0.5 inch. Font must be either Times New Roman 12 point or Arial Regular 11 point. The applicant's last name and page number should appear at the top of every page. Page numbers should be included for Sections 2 through 5. For citing references, a numerical citation style such as the AMA is preferred.

CRITERIA FOR REVIEW OF APPLICATIONS

Priority will be given to applications that meet the following criteria:

- The first and foremost criterion is scientific merit.
- Have a specific and well-designed purpose that is judged to be consistent with the types of research studies eligible for funding described above.
- The sample to be studied must include patients/clients with impairment of the musculoskeletal system. For studies examining the role of the orthopedic physical therapist in the health care environment, the sample to be studied should include physical therapists involved in the delivery of orthopedic physical therapy.
- Projects that examine the effectiveness of orthopedic physical therapy.
- Studies that have evidence of preliminary work.

- Preference will be given to those who have not recently been funded by the APTA Orthopedics in the past.
- The five criteria for review: significance, approach, innovation, investigative team, environment / facilities

REVIEW PROCESS

The APTA Orthopedics Research Committee will review each proposal to determine if it addresses one of the five types of proposals eligible for funding 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 15th. Grants should indicate a start time no sooner than September 15th.

SUBMISSION DEADLINES

LOI submission deadline: **January 30th 2026**

Notification of invitation to apply for full application: **February 6th, 2026**

Full application submission deadline: **March 15th, 2026**

