

PREPARATION AND SUBMISSION OF AN APPLICATION FOR A RESEARCH GRANT

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There is no one correct way of writing a grant. However, it is useful to discuss in general terms what grant reviewers expect to see when making decisions about funding.

From the reviewer's perspective, it must be clear that the planned research addresses a useful question. If the hypothesis was that a dietary supplement is effective in reducing progression of osteoarthritis, the study design would have to be able to address this in a robust and controlled manner with defined outcomes and analysis. Some studies have lesser aims, ie to gather information on a certain intervention (eg a pilot study) in order to be able to use this information to design a larger more robust trial. The second study may be no less worthy.

When planning in vitro or benchwork biomechanical studies there should again be a hypothesis to be addressed, and most reviewers would like to see some pilot data that shows that (i) the team has experience in the type of basic research they propose (ii) its likely that if funded, the study will produce a definite result (whether positive or negative is not relevant to funding).

In terms of layout, after stating the purpose and the hypothesis, the grant should educate the reviewer in the proposed topic with a sound but brief literature review. This should convince the reviewer that the topic is indeed relevant. The study design needs to be laid out in a clear manner (use images or tables) but also the rationale for the design needs to be outlined with supporting material or argument. A small section on statistical methods reassures the reviewer that the study design has a scientific basis. A section on expected outcomes and their significance is a good way to wrap up. In order to justify funding a study a reviewer will want to see that appropriate time has been spent on the proposal, ie that the grant is well written and has enough detailed information. A really good idea put into a hastily prepared and badly written grant will be unlikely to attract funding.

Lastly, the AOARF currently funds applications for one year. If the body of work is larger than this it should be clearly stated what the grant will fund and the expected outcomes of that part of the work (eg accumulation of pilot data for larger study, one section of a body of work, other sections to be funded by other means).