

Osteopathy Australia spark grant guidelines

Funder	Research Foundation Osteopathy Australia
Funding type	Research Grants
Eligibility	All academic levels including PhD students
Maximum award	Funding up to \$20,000 AUD per project
Priority Research Areas	<p>Applicants are encouraged to submit proposals that address one or more of the following priority areas. All proposals should incorporate consideration of functional outcomes and/or capacity building within the context of their specific research focus.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ageing and Disability: Healthy ageing, disability research, and falls prevention with measurable functional outcomes and capacity-building potential. • Primary and Community Care: Primary care models, continuity of care, cost-effectiveness, and prevention or early intervention strategies that enhance patient outcomes and workforce or service capacity. • Musculoskeletal and Pain Conditions: Musculoskeletal conditions, pelvic pain, and endometriosis research focusing on functional improvements and strengthening clinical or research capacity. • Women’s Health: Health across the lifespan, with emphasis on functional outcomes and opportunities for capacity building.
Rounds per year	1
Funding duration	Up to 24 months - applicants need to clearly justify their timeline and budget
Reporting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An interim report MUST be submitted within 12 months, applicants are required to report against key milestones. • A full report within 3 months of the completion of the project.
Scheme contact	Research and Grants funding Officer or call 02 9410 0099

1. Purpose

The Osteopathy Australia Spark grant supports independent research that advances osteopathy and aligns with the Osteopathy Australia Research Priorities and Research Strategy. The scheme is intended to:

- Strengthen and support the profession.
- Reflect the complexity of contemporary osteopathic practice.
- Promote rigorous evaluation of practice.
- Clarify osteopathy's role within the Australian health system.
- Build research capacity among practitioners, academics, and researchers.
- Support outcomes that enhance safety, effectiveness, and best practice.

These grants provide '**spark funding**' opportunities for researchers/practitioners to develop projects that can progress to larger scale, externally funded projects that can achieve societal impact.

Funding is allocated through a **competitive, merit-based process** overseen by the Osteopathy Australia Research Committee. Grants are awarded annually and advertised for at least **60 days** prior to the submission deadline. The Committee may prioritise specific themes in any round. Surplus funds will not be carried forward to future years.

2. Grant funding

- The Osteopathy Australia Research Committee annually reviews and recommends indicative grant budgets. Osteopathy Australia reserves the right to amend the Research Funding Policy at any time. The grant application cycle aligns with the financial year.
- The Committee monitors and records funds disbursement against approved milestones. Final funding amounts are at the Committee's discretion and may be less than requested, based on fund availability and project scope.
- Successful applicants must finalise and execute their Funding Agreement **within four months** of notification and within the same financial year; failure to do so may result in forfeiture. Grant funds are released in two tranches: **50% on execution and 50% upon submission of the interim report.**

3. Eligibility and criteria for assessment of grant applications

- An individual may only be listed as the Lead Investigator on one proposal for any grant type in any application cycle.
- The Lead Investigator must not currently hold an Osteopathy Australia Research Grant.
- At least **one team member must be a registered Osteopath** and a **financial member of Osteopathy Australia.**
- All researchers must be included within the proposal.
- **All researcher levels including PhD students** are encouraged to apply, although PhD students cannot be listed as the lead investigator.
- The institution/organisation listed by the Lead Investigator must be an Australian institution/organisation.
- The institution/organisation listed by the Lead Investigator must be the institution/organisation that will be listed on the final contract.

- Supplementing funding from other grant sources must be approved by the Osteopathy Australia Research Committee, if not described in the original research plan.
- Awards from other sources may be approved where the researcher provides a satisfactory rationale to the Osteopathy Australia Research Committee addressing any budgetary overlap.
- All successful applicants must gain ethics approval where required, prior to funding.
- Where an eligibility ruling is being considered, Osteopathy Australia Research Committee may request further information to assess whether the eligibility requirement has been met.

4. Application Requirements

Team of Investigators

- A CV (max. 2 pages) must be provided for the **Lead Investigator** as well as **all collaborators** on the project, highlighting up to five relevant publications and/or evidence of research capacity.
- Investigator suitability will be assessed on:
 - Experience and unique contribution of each team member.
 - Demonstrated knowledge and expertise in the proposed subject.
 - Potential to secure future external funding following completion of the grant.

Research Design & Methodology

- Proposals must include a **clearly defined hypothesis/objective** with an appropriate and well-justified design and methodology.
- Systematic reviews will only be considered as part of a broader project.
- Projects must be feasible within the funding period and supported by a realistic budget.
- The project description must be structured under the following headings:
Background; Aims/Hypothesis/Objectives; Methodology (design, participants, methods, analysis); Significance and Innovation; Dissemination; Impact.
- Under *participants*, applicants must outline protections for human participants, with attention to gender, minority, and child inclusion.

Significance, Innovation & Impact

- Applications must demonstrate the project's **novelty, significance, and potential for real-world impact** beyond academia.
- Proposals should show how findings will benefit the profession and broader society and indicate potential for future external funding in the topic area.
- A clear plan for **dissemination and stakeholder engagement** must be included.

5. Scoring and selection criteria

Applications for an Osteopathy Australia Research Grant will be assessed by the Osteopathy Australia Research Committee (or independent delegates) and a decision to award a grant will be based on the following criteria:

Alignment with research priorities of Osteopathy Australia strategic plan	(weighting: 10%)
Capacity and credibility of the team of investigators	(weighting: 20%)
Strengthening of collaborative research partnerships	(weighting: 10%)
Quality of research design and methodology	(weighting: 25%)
Significance, Innovation, and Impact of the research project	(weighting: 15%)
Potential for extramural funding following project completion	(weighting: 10%)
Budget justification	(pass/fail)
Feasibility of the project	(weighting: 10%)

6. Budget

A detailed budget table should be provided along with justification of the proposed budget. Please see the below rules regarding budgets:

Allowable and Non-Allowable Expenditure

The following provides guidance on the types of costs that may be supported under this scheme. All costs must be clearly justified as essential to the conduct and completion of the proposed research. **Direct costs** are not an allowable expense.

Allowable expense	Non-allowable expense
Personnel costs	
Hiring of research-specific technical or specialised services (e.g. statistician, transcriptionist, data analyst) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Short-term research assistant support directly tied to project delivery • Student or casual support for data entry, participant coordination, or literature review • Consultant fees for methodological or analytic expertise essential to the study • Software licences or specialised digital tools required for research execution 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Salaries, salary supplementation, or honoraria for investigators or team members • Standard clinical income replacement beyond what is justified for research time • Professional development or training not directly related to the research • Routine clinical or professional expenses (e.g. uniforms, treatment tables, association fees) • General living costs such as rent, food, or utilities • Hosting of conferences, workshops, or seminars unrelated to data collection
Project costs	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participant recruitment, incentives, and reimbursement • Data collection expenses (e.g. survey platforms, laboratory testing, transcription) • Hiring of technical or specialised services (e.g. statistical analysis, data management) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General office supplies or IT equipment normally provided by the host institution (e.g. laptops, phones, stationery) • Infrastructure or capital works (e.g. building refurbishments, clinical furniture)

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research-specific consumables and materials • Equipment or consumables directly required for the project (up to 40% of total budget) • Publication and open-access fees (up to 20% of total budget) • Venue hire or online platform fees for research-related activities • Printing, postage, or materials required for study implementation • Travel for data collection, collaboration, or dissemination of findings - economy airfare only 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Costs associated with routine service delivery not directly linked to the research • Long-term maintenance, hosting, or subscription costs beyond the project timeframe • Conference attendance not directly linked to dissemination of project results
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7. Timeline

A Gantt Chart/table to be provided outlining **key milestones**.

8. Expected outcomes

Category	Outcome
Research quality and influence	<p>The research:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Will advance the knowledge in the field which addresses an issue of importance - Is innovative in concept - Will use well justified approaches to a favourable effect
Publications	<p>Recommended to have at least one (1) peer-reviewed publication in a nationally/internationally recognised scholarly journal and</p> <p>A practice-relevant summary for <i>OsteoLife</i>.</p>
External funding	<p>At least one (1) Category 1-3 national/international competitive grant submission.</p> <p><i>Details of the external funding bodies to which you plan to submit applications must be identified within the application form.</i></p> <p><i>Proof of submission is required in the final report.</i></p>
Other	
Training and education	Record and present a Webinar or Seminar for OA
Conference	An Osteopathy Australia conference presentation. This may be in person or online

9. Submission details

All Applications must be submitted via email to the Osteopathy Australia Research and Grants Officer (research@osteopathy.org.au)

Applications must include the following:

- Details of the team involved and the role and contribution of each member
- Copies of CV's (max two pages in length) including 5 key publications for each team member
- Project details (Title and project summary)
- Background
- Aims/Hypothesis/Objectives,
- Methodology (design, participants, methods, proposed analysis),
- Significance and Innovation
- Dissemination, and Impact
- Project Budget
- Project Milestones (using Gantt chart or table)

10. Change of investigator/extensions/forfeiture of grants

- If you need to make any changes to your project, please contact the Research and Grants Officer as all modifications need to be approved and documented.
- Under exceptional circumstances, extensions of up to six months may be granted. Requests must be submitted in writing to the Research and Grants Officer at least two months before the project end date and include a revised budget and timeline for review.
- All extensions requests to be approved by the Chair of the Research Committee
- Any funds unspent by the project deadline, or where the project is not completed, must be returned to Osteopathy Australia.

11. Financial and reporting obligations

- Funding must be used solely for the approved project, in line with the proposal and budget. Any variations require prior approval from OA. Activation of research funding accounts is independent of ethics or other approvals, and Lead Investigator is responsible for ensuring no work requiring approval commences until approvals are obtained.
- Recipients must submit an annual Report Pro-forma within 12 months with grant holders required to report against agreed milestones, and then a final report is required 30 days of project completion.
- A financial acquittal is required along with the Report Pro-forma; any unspent funding needs to be returned to OA.

12. Acknowledgment of funding

- All research outputs shall acknowledge Osteopathy Australia funding using the wording: *'This research was supported by Osteopathy Australia under Grant No. [insert number].'* Acknowledgment shall appear on journal articles, conference presentations, posters, reports, media releases, public communications, and any other dissemination.

13. Timeline

Stage 1: Application process

27 October 2025	Grant round launch & promotion/Applications open
16 January 2026	Applications close - RO to review for eligibility and compliance.
2nd February 2026	Distribution to external reviewers (3 weeks). Reviewers assess proposals using a weighted scoring rubric
23rd February 2026	Distribute to Research Committee to review and approve shortlisted candidates (2 weeks)
9 March 2026	Send to OA Board for final approval (2 weeks)
23 March 2026	Notify successful and unsuccessful candidates
6 April 2026	Contracts finalised and signed/Funding dispensed
8 April 2026	Public announcement of funded projects

Stage 2: Reporting

5 April 2027	Interim Progress Report due
3 April 2028	Final Progress Report due/financial acquittal
13 April 2028	Promote Report outcomes on SM/website

Further information

If you have any questions, please contact the Osteopathy Australia Research and Grants Officer (research@osteopathy.org.au) or call 02 9410 0099.