

Research

# 2023 AO Spine Research Start-Up Grants

Call for proposals and proposal guidelines



# A grant opportunity for clinical and translational spine research

## 1. Introduction and eligibility

The AO Spine Research Commission is pleased to announce the 2023 AO Spine Research Start-up Grant. These grants are funded by AO Spine, a clinical division of the AO Foundation, a medically-guided, not-for-profit organization, a global network of surgeons, and the premier education, innovation, and research organization for the surgical treatment of trauma and musculoskeletal disorders, based in Switzerland.

This grant opportunity supports young scientists and clinicians in the field of spine research, including both clinical and translational research. It provides seed money in the early part of a research career.

This invitation for proposals is open to young AO researchers\* ( $\leq 40$  years of age) interested in spine research who:

- have completed a professional degree (e.g., MD, DVM, PhD, etc.) within the last five years, OR
- have initiated their first faculty position (i.e., assistant professor) at an academic institution within the last five years

Applicants are only eligible to submit one start-up grant proposal. Multiple proposals from the same applicant will not be considered.



## 2. Funding

Each award shall be **up to CHF 25'000 and for the duration of one year.**

Salaries for the applicant (main applicant and co-applicants) will normally not be approved. If the



project is only possible with some funding for the applicant, it must be clearly shown that the funding requested is essential, project specific, and well documented. Written and signed confirmation from the institution director/head is required with the application that no alternative source of income (including salary, stipend, or grant) is available.

Only project-specific travel expenses with a maximum amount of CHF 2'000 for conferences will be covered. It is encouraged that all recipients disseminate their findings at the [Global Spine Congress](#), AO Spine's annual meeting.

Applicants should note that indirect costs shall not exceed 5% of the overall budget. Payments will be made to the Institution and not to the individual applicants, provided that the Institution agrees to hold such payments in accordance with the terms of the specific grant.

Additional funding from other AO institutions or any other sources must be disclosed in detail. If your planned research is in collaboration with the AO Research Institute (ARI) Davos, it must be approved by its Director prior to submission and a written confirmation of its approval must accompany the application. If other funding is or becomes available, it must be made clear how this will affect the overall budget of the project, should the application be successful.

Please note that any medical device or technology development cannot be funded via this call and should be directed towards the [AO Innovation Translation Center's Technology Transfer](#).

\*An AO researcher includes any member of the AO Foundation's clinical divisions including spine, trauma, craniomaxillofacial (CMF), and veterinary (VET).

### 3. Applications

Each applicant must submit their proposal as a word document via email to Janneke Loomans, email: [janneke.loomans@aofoundation.org](mailto:janneke.loomans@aofoundation.org).

[DOWNLOAD APPLICATION FORM](#)

Please visit [bit.ly/2023\\_research\\_grant](https://bit.ly/2023_research_grant) to download the application template.

**The deadline for submission is April 1, 2023 at 23:59 CET.**

**Applications which do not conform completely to the application format or which ignore or fail to comply with any part of the guidelines may be returned to the applicant and will not be considered unless re-submitted by the deadline.**

If your planned research involves the use of an *in vivo* animal model, please provide all necessary documentation and details.

Prior to applying for this grant, please ensure with your institution's legal department that the sample grant agreement template (available at [bit.ly/2023\\_grant\\_agreement](https://bit.ly/2023_grant_agreement)) provided is acceptable. If awarded, this is the agreement that will be used.

This agreement is not negotiable, and AO Spine reserves the right to cancel the grant should the contract not be duly signed by the main applicant and a representative from the institution within the defined timelines.

### 4. Application evaluation and selection process

A blinded peer-review process that will lead to the selection of awards will be conducted through scientific evaluation by the AO Spine Research Commission.

The decisions are final and binding. A concise critique will be provided only for successful awardees. No critiques will be provided to support the final decision in all other cases.

Applications are rated on their scientific merit, clinical relevance, and feasibility:

- **Relevance:** Does the project have strong rationale and relevance?
- **Research Question:** Is the research question clear and match the rationale?
- **Methodology:** Is the methodology appropriate to answer the research question?
- **Feasibility:** Can the investigator deliver the expected result within the estimated timeframe (max. 1 year) and complete the work?
- **Budget:** Is the budget reasonable for the expected deliverables?
- **Start-up Status:** Is the project novel and/or serve as a start-up/pilot project?

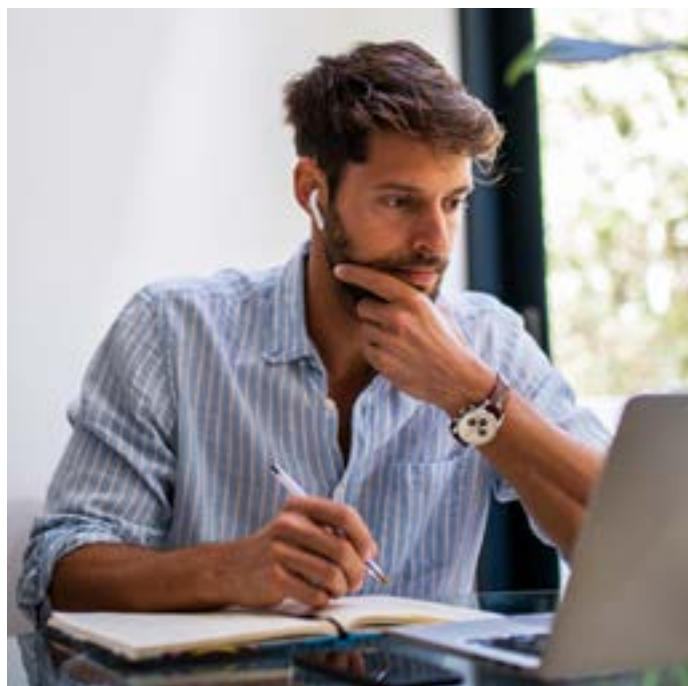


## 5. Results and reporting

An interim progress report regarding the research project must be submitted to the AO Spine Research Commission 6 months after the work commences, using the research grant report form provided. A final report must be submitted at the end of the 12-month period and shall include a description of the grant's accomplishments and an accounting for the funds received under the grant.

If the work cannot be completed within the 12-month timeframe, AO Spine must be notified and a written request to extend the grant must be submitted for approval. The AO Spine Research Commission reserves the right to discontinue the grant, with return of full funding by the recipient, if for any reason it is determined that the activities for which the grant is intended to address cannot be met.

AO Spine must be cited as the source of funding in any publication, presentation, or in any publicity resulting from the award or its results. It is encouraged that successful applicants present their research findings at the [Global Spine Congress](#) and submit their work for publication in the [Global Spine Journal](#).



## 6. Retention of records

AO Spine shall retain all records pertaining to all grants including grant applications, names of reviewers, scoring sheets by reviewers, correspondence, progress reports, and distribution of funds.

## 7. Miscellaneous

For support on how to develop a robust grant proposal, take advantage of [AO PEER – AO Program for Education and Excellence in Research](#). It provides a collection of useful research learning tools, including grant writing and study protocol development, designed by surgeons, for surgeons.

## 8. Timelines

**The following are non-negotiable deadlines:**

<b>Open call-for-proposals:</b>	January 10, 2023
<b>Deadline for proposals:</b>	April 1, 2023 (23:59 CET)
<b>Grants announced:</b>	June 2023
<b>Contract start:</b>	June–September 2023
<b>Interim report:</b>	6 months from the project start date
<b>Final report:</b>	June–September 2024

## 9. Contact information

Please address all correspondence and questions to Janneke Loomans using the details below:

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