



Victorian Orthopaedic Foundation

Grant Guidelines 2026

Victorian Orthopaedic Foundation 2026 Grant Guidelines

Closing date:	Friday 24 July - 5:00pm AEST
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Introduction

These grant guidelines contain the rules and regulations governing the administration of the 2026 Victorian Orthopaedic Foundation (VOF) annual grant program.

Applicants should read these guidelines prior to submitting an application for funding.

Background

The late Professor John Hart, a highly-esteemed and visionary Victorian orthopaedic surgeon, established the Victorian Orthopaedic Research Trust (VORT) in 1998, the year he was elected as AOA President. His original vision for VORT was to support 'at the grassroots' young Victorian researchers. VOF grants are particularly intended to support opportunities for applicants to develop research capability and engagement early in their careers.

In 2020, VOF was constituted as a new legal entity to replace VORT. VOF is a public ancillary fund with tax deductible status available for those making donations.

The [VOF Board of Directors](#) has responsibility for the organisational and financial management of VOF, its funds and investments.

In 2024, the Tasmanian Branch of the AOA entered into a Memorandum of Understanding with VOF for the support of Tasmanian researchers.

In 2026 a VOF Grant for a Tasmanian research project will be made available, in addition to the grant/s for Victorian researchers.

In 2026, applications are open to Victorian and Tasmanian AOA members.

Applicants must be the Lead Investigator for their research project.

The Lead Investigator must be a Fellow of AOA in their first 10 years since attaining FRACS, or a trainee/Associate member of AOA.

It is expected that the Lead Investigator will be well supported and mentored by an experienced research team, both in preparing the application, and if successful in attaining a grant, in undertaking the research and achieving the success of the project.

Please see further details under Eligibility.

Grant Process Timeline

Friday 29 May-Applications open

Friday 24 July-Applications close

July-Sept-Marking of Applications

October-Announcement of Grants for 2026

Funding Rules and Guidelines

1. Enquiries and assistance

Enquiries and requests for assistance with grant applications and funding should be

directed to: research@aoa.org.au

2. Eligibility

The following eligibility criteria apply to all VOF grant applications:

- The applicant must be the Lead Investigator for the research project.
- The Lead Investigator must be an AOA trainee/Associate member of AOA, or a Fellow of AOA in their first 10 years since attaining FRACS. They must be a member of the Victorian or Tasmanian branch.
- In addition, at least **one** of the other chief investigators for the project must be an AOA Affiliate, Associate or Fellow from Victoria or Tasmania; they should be an experienced researcher prepared to mentor the Lead Investigator in completing the VOF Grant application, and to support them to plan for and, should they attain a VOF grant, undertake successful research.
- The Lead Investigator is responsible for the direction of the research, as well as for all communication between VOF and the research institution. Should they be successful in attaining a VOF Grant, they will be responsible for the timely submission of VOF reporting requirements, ethics approval, grant acceptance etc.
- They are also responsible for the subsequent presentation of the results of the research at an AOA Scientific Meeting - within three years of receiving the grant.
- Successful Lead Investigators are not eligible to apply for VOF funding in the year following a successful application, though they may be listed as a co-investigator on more than one grant application.
- Applicants may submit ONE application per annual grant round and may hold only one VOF grant at any one time.
- Previous recipients of VOF grant funding who have not adhered to the requirements for reporting for their previous grants may be considered ineligible for further future VOF funding.

All applicants are encouraged to seek advice from mentors or someone experienced in the field of the research project before submitting an application.

VOF encourages newcomers to be involved in research, and if requested, will endeavour to help applicants find suitable mentors or advisors in the field.

It is desirable that the research team has access to a research coordinator, statistician and/or a link to a tertiary institution which would enable support and strong collaboration in undertaking the research.

3. Application Process

Applicants are required to complete an online application form, accessible from the [VOF website](#) during the application period.

Applications must be submitted by the posted deadline. Late applications will not be accepted.

The application seeks information regarding:

- Proposed timeline
- Aim/s of the research
- Background to the project
- Project's feasibility
- Potential significance of the research
- Methodology, including relevant references
- Detailed budget, including information on financial support from other sources
- Ethics approval
- Information regarding the members of your research team

4. Types of Projects

VOF grants may be provided for:

- laboratory or clinical basic science orthopaedic-related research, including bio-mechanical research into orthopaedic applications, molecular biology and/or anatomical studies
- preventative options, new treatments, screening and diagnostic techniques, clinical outcome studies
- applied science studies including pain management and operative intervention trials
- other research that is directly relevant to the practice of orthopaedic surgery in Australia, such as a cost or meta-analysis.

Researchers may wish to be aware of the priority research areas which the AOA Academy of Clinical Excellence in Orthopaedics (ACE) has determined, with a view to potential future alignment:

- Improving trauma and acute orthopaedic care in rural and regional Australia
- Advanced management of degenerative musculoskeletal and joint diseases in Australia
- Paediatric orthopaedic care.

5. Amount of Funding Available

For 2026 VOF grants will be capped at \$9,000 each. The number of grants available each year and the amount of funding provided will vary depending on the number and merit quality of the applications received, as well as the amount of funding available for distribution.

6. Use of Funds

VOF grant funding must be spent on costs directly related to the project listed on the application. Applicants are required to submit a breakdown of budget items that will be covered by requested funds. Approval must be sought for any variation to the expenses listed in the initial application.

In general, VOF funds may be used to cover the following expenses:

- Salary for a research assistant
- Consumable items (e.g. postage, printing, stationery, chemicals, glassware, testing)
- Items of equipment essential to the conduct of the research
- Statistical analysis/statistician costs
- Transcription and translation services
- Electronic Data Capture software (e.g. Redcap, Qualtrics)
- Specimens
- Laboratory hire costs
- Trial participant reimbursement costs (e.g. parking, travel costs, incidentals)
- Publication costs of an accepted manuscript. (NB: This funding will not become available until evidence of publication acceptance is provided)

VOF funds may **not** be used for:

- Salaried employees already employed by a research institution
- Items considered standard equipment for any research institution
- Textbooks, personal computers, general computer equipment nor mobile phones
- Travel expenses.

7. Duration of Award

Unless otherwise approved, VOF grants are awarded for a period of 12 months from the date of award. It is expected that the grant funds will be expended during this period.

8. Assessment of VOF Grant Applications

VOF grant applications are independently assessed on their scientific merit by the VOF Research Committee against a standard set of scoring criteria.

Areas of assessment include:

- Innovation
- Quality of the application, including if it addresses scientific, technical or organisational challenges that could be encountered during the research
- Methodology, including study design and the development of the methodology; its appropriateness for the question/issue being explored
- Scientific Merit & Feasibility, including if the work is ethically acceptable
- Translation/potential clinical impact, significance or relevance to musculoskeletal disease - including if the research will address a gap or need; if it will lead to new understandings about and/or improvements for human health and/or if it links to or extends/builds upon other research
- Potential for research to expand into a broader body of work / support higher degree students / competitive grant applications
- Budget

Following the independent scoring process, the Research Committee makes recommendations to the VOF Board, which makes the final decisions regarding the awarding of grants.

9. Successful Grants

Award of successful grant funding is contingent on submission of the following:

- Confirmation of ethics approval for the project

- An executed copy of the VOF Grant Agreement, and
- An invoice with the bank details for the administering institution.

Applications for VOF grants may be submitted prior to receipt of ethics approval.

However, funds will not be released until confirmation of approval is received.

10. Ethical Conduct of Research

It is expected that researchers undertaking clinical trials adhere to Good Clinical Practice (GCP) guidelines as per the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research.

When human subjects or tissues are to be used in a research project, it is the responsibility of the grant recipient and their institution to ensure that the institution has a complete copy of the research protocol approved by the institution's human subject review board, a copy of that board's current approval notice, and a copy of the patient informed consent form(s).

If awarded a grant, these documents must be submitted before funding can be dispersed.

VOF also observes the Australian National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC)'s Australian code for the care and use of animals for scientific purposes. Applicants for grants must accept and abide by the NHMRC animal experiment guidelines.

All applications must be accompanied by an institutional ethics committee report whenever studies are to be carried out using humans or animals. If awarded a grant, this report must be submitted before funding can begin.

Institutional ethics committees must be constituted according to the guidelines of the NHMRC. Applications should also be signed by the head of the department and of the institution.

All entities that receive funding from VOF must adhere to the following principles:

- animals shall be used in biomedical research only when no other means of obtaining scientifically sound, valid and useful results are available
- the minimum number of appropriate animals required to obtain and validate results shall be used
- the acquisition, care and use of animals must be in accordance with all applicable federal, state and local laws and regulations
- certifications must be received from research facilities prior to being approved for a research grant that the facility, its researchers and employees adhere to the guidelines of the NHMRC
- in cases requiring the death of an animal, only the most appropriate and humane form of euthanasia shall be used consistent with the purpose of the research.

11. Variation to Approved Grants

If a variation to the originally submitted application is required after awarding of the grant funds, applicants must submit a written request for variation to VOF via email to research@aoa.org.au Variations will be considered by the VOF Board on a case-by-case basis. Examples of variations include budget adjustments, changes to personnel and investigators, or requests for extension of a project end date.

12. Reporting

Applicants are required to submit a progress report at the conclusion of the 12-month grant award period. The progress report form can be downloaded [from the VOF website](#).

Reports are due by 31 October in the year following the award of the grant.

Further progress reports may be required if an extension to the due date is granted.

Victorian Orthopaedic Foundation

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