

Translational Call 2027: Call for applications

Summary

We have extended the lifespan of our [research strategy](#) from spring 2026 to spring 2028, to align our organisational and research strategies. We fund research that covers the causes, consequences and effects of the most prevalent arthritis conditions, and those that have the highest impacts on people. We will also support those conditions most frequently associated with arthritis. We do not actively exclude any areas of arthritis-related research. We will prioritise our investments to ensure that we maintain a varied and balanced research awards portfolio that covers the most prevalent arthritis conditions as well as rarer conditions.

Translational research facilitates the turning of observations in the laboratory, clinic and community into interventions that directly benefit people with arthritis. To support this important area of research we have dedicated funding for translational projects that will help bridge the gap from early-stage research to being ready for commercial development. This translational funding scheme will aim to help progress the development of novel, innovative technologies towards clinical development for the benefit of people with arthritis. The call is seeking to support high-quality, well-defined Proof of Concept projects that will address a clear unmet clinical need for people with arthritis. The funding should advance technologies along the developmental pathway leading to further investment and/or development by industry.

Funding is available for up to 24 months duration, up to £250,000 in value. We plan to invest around £1M, making up to 4 awards.

If your proposal is suitable for co-funding with another funder, please email us as early as possible, at awards@arthritis-uk.org as we may be able to facilitate such partnerships.

This funding call has a two-stage process. Outline applications should be submitted through the Arthritis UK Awards Portal to a deadline of **16:00 Wednesday 28 October 2026**.

If you have any questions or would like to discuss your research proposal, please email the Awards Office at awards@arthritis-uk.org.

What we are looking for

Arthritis UK is the largest dedicated funder of arthritis research globally. We fund research driven by the needs of people with arthritis and with the greatest potential to improve the quality of their lives. Our research ambition is to accelerate the pace and precision of research that benefits people living with arthritis.

We have extended the lifespan of our [research strategy](#) from spring 2026 to spring 2028, to align our organisational and research strategies. Our organisational strategy is 'Arthritis First' which means that we will continue to fund research that focuses on the most prevalent and impactful arthritis conditions in our existing priority areas; early detection and prevention, targeted treatments, living well, and people and partnerships.

We aim to maintain a research award portfolio that will bring most benefit and impact for people with arthritis. We fund research that covers the causes, consequences and effects of the most prevalent arthritis conditions, and those that have the highest impact on people. We will also support those conditions most frequently associated with arthritis.

We do not actively exclude any areas of arthritis-related research. Where necessary, we will prioritise our investments to ensure that we maintain a varied and balanced research awards portfolio that covers the most prevalent arthritis conditions as well as rarer conditions. We will support research into the causes and consequences of arthritis. We may also actively seek research proposals in defined, narrower areas where needed.

All our research investments aim to generate the best possible impact for the benefit of people with arthritis.

This call will support high-quality, well-defined Proof of Concept projects that aim to develop a commercially viable technology that will address a clear unmet clinical need for people with arthritis. It is expected that projects will have been developed to a stage where further validation of the technical, market or commercial concept is required to attract commercial investment.

Translational research cuts across all aspects of our research strategy and therefore applicants can submit projects which address any of our priority areas:

- Early Detection and Prevention
- Targeted Treatment
- Living Well

Applicants should make clear which area their project is addressing and how the technology would show benefit for people with arthritis.

In this initiative, we seek to fund projects in the following technology areas:

- **Medical devices** - these can be any instrument, apparatus, implement, machine, appliance, implant, reagent for in vitro use, software, material or other similar or related article, intended by the manufacturer to be used, alone or in combination for a medical purpose.

- **Orthotics** - an external medical device (such as a brace or splint) for supporting, immobilizing, or treating muscles, joints, or skeletal parts which are weak, ineffective, deformed, or injured.
- **Implantable therapeutic delivery** - an implantable device or system to control the release of therapeutic agents either systemically or locally to improve its efficacy and safety by controlling the rate, time and location of drug release.
- **Diagnostics** - (in vitro diagnostic medical devices) - In vitro diagnostics (IVDs) are tests used on biological samples from the human body to detect disease conditions and infections or determine the status of a person's health.
- **Imaging technologies** - (imaging diagnostics or medical imaging) are methods, techniques and processes for imaging the human body for the purpose of diagnosis, monitoring and treatment of disease.
- **Cell therapy and regenerative medicine** - regenerative medicine is the methods, processes and treatments to replace or regenerate human cells, tissues or organs in order to restore or establish normal function. This includes cell therapies, tissue engineering, gene therapy and biomedical engineering techniques. Cell therapy is using cells or cellular material, either autologous or allogeneic, for the treatment of disease or chronic conditions to restore healthy function.
- **Novel therapeutics (small molecules or biologics)** – we would expect applications in this area to be highly focused proposals on the core Proof of Concept experiments required to show, for example, target engagement of their novel therapeutic, or to show that their target is present in human tissues.

To be eligible for this call applicants are expected to have completed all fundamental or underpinning research required to understand the basic principles of the technology and develop the concept (Technology Readiness Level (TRL) 1 and 2 where relevant). The technology should be in a position where the next required step is to show preclinical Proof of Concept (TRL 3 and beyond where relevant).

Projects must have a clear commercial route and truly address an unmet clinical need for people with arthritis. They should be milestone driven with a clear delivery plan. This scheme will not fund fundamental or discovery research projects.

Proposals demonstrating positive industry support or collaboration will be strongly encouraged. The benefits of the proposed technology over any competing products should be made clear. Applications will be expected to demonstrate that they have considered the intellectual property position, the proposed route to market and commercialisation and a strategy to navigate the relevant regulatory processes. Applicants should also show that they have engaged with their relevant Technology Transfer Office prior to application and will continue to work with them on the IP and commercial strategy throughout the development of the project.

Applicants must ensure that they have understood the scope and requirements of the call before submitting an application. Applications out of scope will be rejected at the validation stage and will not be considered in the review process.

We expect the outcomes from this call to lead to the advancement of technologies along the developmental pathway, positioning them for further larger scale investment and/or development by industry.

If you have any questions about the scope of this call or would like to discuss the eligibility of your proposal please email awards@arthritis-uk.org.

Requirements

Research Involvement

Applications should involve people with arthritis in the development and design of the outlined work. There should be clear plans for continued collaboration with them in the oversight, delivery and dissemination of the proposed project. More information and guidance can be found in our Patient and Public Involvement and Engagement Hub on our website: [support for researchers to involve people with arthritis](#).

Diversity and Inclusion

Our vision is for our research to reflect, and address, the diverse needs of all those living with arthritis. We aim to be open, inclusive and equitable in the support and service we provide to our stakeholders. We are committed to ensuring meaningful inclusive involvement in research and the promotion of equitable access to participation in, and the benefits from research. We are committed to diversity, equity and inclusion in who does research, what research is done, and who benefits from research. We will publish our research equity, diversity and inclusion plans in 2026.

We expect people with arthritis from a diverse range of backgrounds, cultures and experiences to be partners and participants in our research activities, representing the full life-course of the population. Where a research proposal involves the participation of people with arthritis, we will only fund research that is able to demonstrate appropriate representation and diversity (ethnicity, socioeconomic, gender and age) as relevant to the aims of the proposal.

Research involving animals, cells and tissues should consider sex, genetic and other relevant characteristics. For research using animals use the National Centre for the Replacement, Refinement and Reduction of Animals in Research (NC3Rs) [Experimental Design Assistant](#) to support experimental design.

We will fund health service research that accounts for differences in local environments, noting that specific needs of the four UK nations devolved healthcare and research funding contexts require tailored solutions.

Applicants should design research carefully to ensure that project outputs, outcomes and impact do not contribute to exacerbation of health inequities. Applications should show that they have deliberately considered the desired impact on health inequities, any risks or possible unintended consequences, and identified any relevant barriers.

Animal Research

We will only fund animal research where there is no viable alternative, that is well designed, ethical and scientifically justified. We are committed to the principles of reduction, replacement and refinement (3Rs) in animal studies. More information and guidance can be found on [Applying for an Award](#).

Collaboration and partnership

We welcome collaborations and partnership with industry and international stakeholders. If your proposal is suitable for co-funding with another funder or you have third party funding, please email awards@arthritis-uk.org as early as possible.

In some areas – such as multiple long-term conditions, rare diseases and collective immune-mediated inflammatory – we particularly welcome partnership approaches.

Clinical Research

Please contact your relevant national service supporting and advising applied health, public health or social care researchers, or a relevant Clinical Research Facility or Clinical Trials Unit before starting an application:

- England [NIHR Research Support Service](#)
- Scotland: [NHS Research Scotland Research Design Service](#)
- Wales: [Health and Care Research Wales Support and Delivery Service](#)
- UKCRC-registered Clinical Trial Unit: [find a CTU – UKCRC](#)

Pilot/feasibility studies to inform the development of a clinical trial to test an intervention, will be accepted. With the current clinical research challenges in the NHS, investigators and sponsors are required to make transparent and realistic assessments of capacity and capability to deliver.

Co-applicants and collaborators at NHS sites are asked to support proposals only if there is a certainty that they can meet recruitment targets and timelines indicated.

It will be taken that institution signatories in the role of Sponsor are wholly satisfied and supportive of the assurances provided upon submission of the application.

Data and sample resources

We encourage researchers to make use of established, pre-existent cohorts, collections, bioresources and registries. When proposing to make use of human tissue, consider carefully whether existing resources meet your needs and justify why any new collection is necessary.

We require those receiving funding to create a tissue collection, provide access to this and register the collection in a publicly accessible directory.

Intellectual Property

Applicants should make careful consideration regarding use of background IP (use of patents, software, datasets, biological materials, compounds, cell lines or any background IP owned by your institution or other institutions involved) and confirm access through the required agreements (Material Transfer Agreements, licenses and permissions).

Applicants should assess whether the proposed research will create protectable IP: including therapeutics compounds, diagnostics, new methods, new targets, MoA (Mechanism of action), devices, software, algorithms, research tools, datasets or proprietary know-how. Consider anything that produces new IP or provides a competitive advantage. Even negative results or optimisation data can constitute valuable know-how.

Who can apply

Arthritis UK research awards may only be held in universities, NHS Trusts or recognised academic research institutes in the UK. The lead applicant does not need to have a permanent position, but at least one applicant must have a substantive position at the host (lead) institution.

People with lived experience and international collaborators may be included as co-applicants. Applications with industrial partners are encouraged.

Individuals who are employed by, or whose salary derives from, a commercial organisation are not eligible to lead an Arthritis UK award, they can be included as a co-applicant or a collaborator.

We welcome applications affiliated to the [UK Musculoskeletal Translational Research Collaboration](#).

For further details on who can apply and other roles in the application, for further information see the associated guidance document.

What you can apply for

Awards of up to 24 months duration, up to £250,000 in value are available. Costs for salaries, expenses and small items of essential equipment can be requested.

If you intend to outsource parts of the project to be undertaken by a third party, please email awards@arthritis-uk.org as early as possible to discuss this with us.

Salary costs for a part-time project manager to assist with the delivery of the project can be included. Reasonable consultancy costs (including for regulatory advice) will be eligible for funding, however applicants are strongly advised to contact the charity to discuss these proposed costs before submitting their application.

For further details on what you can apply for, see the associated guidance document.

How to apply

Applications to this scheme will be via a two-stage process, with an initial outline application stage which will undergo panel review. Those who are successful at this stage will be invited to submit a full application.

Apply via our [Arthritis UK Awards Portal](#). Applicants must carefully read the application form and relevant guidance document before starting an application. Please ensure the most appropriate language is used in each section of the form and that the correct sections are completed.

The deadline for the receipt of outline applications is **16:00 on Wednesday 28 October 2026**. **Submissions after 16:00 will not be accepted.**

No additional application signatories will be required at the outline stage. If invited to proceed to the full stage then please note that additional signatories will need to review and approve the application in the system ahead of it being finally submitted. More information on this will be provided to those successful at outline stage.

How will applications be assessed

Applications will be reviewed by our Translational Call funding panel, which includes people with lived experience of arthritis. All eligible outline applications will be reviewed and feedback provided.

For those invited to submit a full application, these will be reviewed and applicants will be invited to provide a rebuttal to reviews before a formal funding panel meeting.

All applications will be reviewed and assessed on the following criteria:

- importance and potential impact
- relevance and scope
- novelty and innovation
- involvement in application development
- involvement plans
- research design, delivery and clarity
- feasibility
- commercial potential
- value for money.

We expect applications to include information on how the research will bring impact and benefit to people with arthritis. We currently capture the impact of our funded research using our framework below, which focuses on seven areas:

- Policy and Practice – our research is influencing how arthritis is treated or managed.
- Intellectual property, products, and services – new innovations, treatments or tools which improve patients' lives.
- New knowledge – our research has changed what we know about arthritis.
- Patient and Public Involvement – the benefit that patients bring to the research itself.
- Partnerships – new networks, partners and collaborations which extend research.
- Capacity Building – our investments are increasing the human or technical capacity to conduct research.
- Leveraged funding – new funding that has been awarded to continue the research we funded.

More detail around these impact areas can be found in the guidance document, including examples of outcomes which relate to each impact area.

Award management

Reporting - We expect all awards outputs and outcomes to be reported annually during the funded period and for 3-5 years post-completion. Reporting expectations are agreed at the start of the project.

In addition, translational projects are required to complete a brief quarterly progress report through the lifetime of the award.

All award holders must also provide an annual expenditure report for monitoring of finances and project progress. A meeting will be held to discuss any budget variance and agree payment for the following year.

Projects that require recruitment of human participants are required to complete a six monthly progress report to the Progress Review Committee.

Publications - All original peer-reviewed articles published as a result of our funding **must** comply with our open access policies. Award holders should tell us directly about all articles in peer-reviewed literature or disseminated publicly (for example, press releases) as soon as possible and by the time the article has been accepted for publication or dissemination.

More information and guidance can be found on [Managing your award](#).

Intellectual property - Award holders must notify us of **any** potential for, or activities relating to, development of intellectual property and seek our consent before progressing any commercial activity arising from this award. Award holders can get help on IP management from their local technology transfer or commercialisation offices. Early consultation will help prevent issues that might arise during the course of the project and can identify additional opportunities.

Research Engagement - We are dependent on funds raised from public donations. It is important that you join us in raising the awareness of Arthritis UK. Our current logo and acknowledgement of Arthritis UK's support should be used on all documents/presentations relating to this award.

Award holders may be invited to meetings with Arthritis UK to discuss their research and/or asked to contribute written summaries.

Timelines

Call opens in grant management system (outline application form available)	Wednesday 16 September 2026
Deadline for outline applications	16:00 Wednesday 28 October 2026
Outline application panel review	Early January 2027
Invitation to submit full application	By 20 January 2027

Full application deadline	Wednesday 17 March 2027
Invitation to provide a rebuttal to the panel review	Mid-May 2027
Deadline to provide a rebuttal to the panel review	Late May 2027
Full application panel review	June 2027
Notification of award	Early July 2027
Project start date	From August 2027 at earliest

Contact details

For all enquiries, please email the Awards Office at awards@arthritis-uk.org.