

**The Orthotic and Prosthetic  
Education and Research Foundation, Inc. (OPERF)**

**Small Grant Awards Program Overview**  
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## **OPERF Small Grant Awards Overview**

The Orthotic and Prosthetic Education and Research Foundation (OPERF) provides funding to support clinically relevant, investigator-initiated research in orthotics and prosthetics (O&P). Small grant awards are designated for investigators who have attained a doctoral degree or have prior research experience. A single one-year Small Grant of up to \$25,000 is given on an annual basis. Awards will be based on the scientific merit of the proposed research project. (For more information, reference the OPERF Review Form on the [OPERF website](#)). OPERF has arranged for award recipients to present their research at the American Academy of Orthotists and Prosthetists (the Academy) [Annual Meeting & Scientific Symposium](#). The Academy has donated complimentary registration fees and reserved speaking slots for investigators to present their OPERF-sponsored research.

### Requirements

- The principal investigator (PI) must have attained a doctoral degree or provide evidence of prior research experience.
- The host institution and the primary research site must be located within the United States.
- The project must be clinically relevant to the O&P profession.
- The proposed research must include a clinician trained in O&P as the PI or co-investigator.
- A letter of intent (LOI) is due in advance of the proposal (see Funding Cycle, below).
  - Maximum of one page in length (12-point font, 1-inch borders, single spaced).
  - Must briefly describe the proposed research.
  - The LOI is used only to assemble a review committee with appropriate topic area expertise. Feedback is not provided in response to the LOI, and you do not need to await an invitation to submit. However, your application will not be reviewed if an LOI is not submitted.
- The research proposal should be a *maximum of 10 pages* in length (12-point font, 1-inch borders, single spaced).
  - The research proposal should include the following components:
    - Application cover page (available on the [OPERF website](#))
    - Abstract (up to 500 words)
    - Specific aims\*
      - The specific aims section of a grant application typically provides a concise statement of the goals of the proposed research and summarizes the expected outcome(s), including the impact that the results of the proposed research will have on the research field involved. List succinctly the specific objectives of the research proposed (e.g., to test a stated hypothesis, create a novel design, solve a specific problem, challenge an existing paradigm or clinical practice, address a critical barrier to progress in the field, or develop new technology).
    - Background and significance\*
      - With regards to background, provide the rationale for the proposed research project, the relevant background history, and the need for the proposed project. Indicate how the proposed project relates to current literature on the topic. This is your opportunity to demonstrate your understanding of the published literature in the topic area.
      - With regards to significance, explain the importance of the problem or critical barrier to progress that the proposed project addresses. Explain how the proposed project will improve scientific knowledge, technical capability, and/or clinical practice in O&P. Describe how the concepts, methods,

technologies, treatments, services, or interventions that drive P&O will be changed if the proposed aims are achieved.

- Previous research (if appropriate) \*
  - This section can be used to highlight and describe previous research you have conducted that supports the proposed application (e.g., pilot data).
- Methodology\*
  - Describe the overall strategy, methodology, and analyses to be used to accomplish the specific aims of the project. Include how the data will be collected, analyzed, and interpreted. Discuss potential problems, alternative strategies, and benchmarks for success anticipated to achieve the aims.
- Project timeline (including milestones and deliverables) \*
  - This section is usually best served by a graphic representation of the timing and duration of each aim and task within your proposed project and an indication of when you will achieve each milestone or deliverable.
- Anticipated results\*
  - This section allows you to summarize the expected outcome(s) of your proposed project, including the impact that the results of the proposed project will have on the O&P field.
- References
  - The references section should be used only to cite references used within the application to support the need, rationale, and approach for the proposed project. Format your citations and references using an accepted citing/referencing style (e.g. AMA or Vancouver).
- Budget, budget justification, and facilities description
  - Provide a budget that itemizes the cost of each item to be paid for with the award. This is usually best presented in the form of a table.
  - A budget justification should accompany the budget. A budget justification should provide a narrative description of the costs included in your budget. Explain what each line item is for and how you arrived at the total cost indicated in the budget.
  - Provide a detailed description of the institutional facilities and resources available to the PI to conduct the proposed project.
- Current/pending support related to proposed research
  - Indicate for the PI and each collaborator any current or pending funding support related to the proposed research. Pending support refers to any applications for funding that have been submitted and for which the outcome is not yet known.
- List of collaborators (including a short biosketch for each)
- Letters of support (e.g., from department or institution, collaborators, etc.)
  - Letters of support are important to indicate that the applicant's institution is aware that this application is being submitted and will support the project if funded, that external collaborators have agreed to be involved in the proposed project if funded; and to provide evidence that the PI has access to any additional resources or support needed to complete the proposed project.
- Biosketch for the principal investigator

*Note: page limit applies only to those sections marked with an asterisk (\*).*

## Award Specifics

- Award funds will be paid directly to the award recipient's host institution.
  - A maximum indirect rate (i.e., facilities and administrative costs) of 10 percent of the total direct costs will be allowed under the OPERF Small Grant Awards program (maximum direct and indirect costs are not to exceed \$25,000 per award).
  - Small Grant funds will be disbursed in two installments to the host institution. The first installment of 50% of the total award will be disbursed upon commencement of the award and the second installment of 50% of the total award will be disbursed at approximately six months after commencement of the project. Disbursement of the second installment of Small Grant funds is contingent upon a satisfactory progress report as evaluated by the OPERF Research Committee Chair.
  - Investigators must submit a **six-month progress report** to the OPERF Research Committee Chair. This report should be 2–5 pages in length and submitted at least five months after the initial funds are received by the host institution. The principal investigator is responsible for the timely submission of the progress report.
    - The report should be typed and single spaced using 10–12-point font on pages with 1-inch borders. Legible figures may be included in the report.
    - The report should describe progress over the first six months of the award period and any potential challenges encountered.
- If human or animal subjects are included in the proposed research, the applicant will be required to provide evidence of Institutional Review Board (IRB) or Animal Care and Use Committee (ACUC) approval from the host institution before funds are disbursed. Approval is not due at the time of submission, but it will be required to receive award funds.
- Small Grant Award recipients must submit a 2–5-page **final report** to the OPERF Research Committee Chair no later than 30 days after the award ends. The principal investigator is responsible for the timely submission of the progress report.
  - The report should be typed and single spaced using 10–12-point font on pages with 1-inch borders. Legible figures may be included in the report.
  - The report should describe progress over the project period and summarize the expenditure of the award.
- Small Grant Award recipients will be responsible for submitting an abstract (based on the OPERF-funded research) to the AAOP Annual Meeting, **with a copy sent to the OPERF Research Committee Chair by email**. The abstract should be formatted using the template provided by AAOP when the call for papers is announced (approximately June of the year prior to the Annual Meeting). The abstract should be submitted following the standard instructions provided by AAOP for submission of free papers.
- Upon acceptance of the AAOP abstract, Small Grant Award recipients must attend the AAOP Annual Meeting and present their OPERF-funded research results.
  - Meeting registration fees have been donated by AAOP for all OPERF Award recipients.
  - Airfare and lodging costs for the AAOP Annual Meeting are the responsibility of the Award recipient and may be paid using grant funds.
- A no-cost extension period of up to one year may be requested by the award recipient prior to presenting the study results at the AAOP Annual Meeting. Requests for no-cost extensions should be submitted in writing by email to the OPERF Research Committee Chair one month prior to the end date of the award period.
- Award recipients are encouraged to submit the results of their work as a manuscript to the *Journal of Prosthetics and Orthotics* (JPO) or another peer-reviewed journal.

- Award recipients are required to acknowledge OPERF funding in any publication or presentation of the funded research by including the following statement: *“This presentation/work was supported (or “supported in-part” if the project was also supported by other sources) through funds from the Orthotic and Prosthetic Education and Research Foundation, Inc. (OPERF).”*
- Applicants are encouraged to keep a copy of their original emails containing their LOIs and proposals to verify that they have met the deadlines. OPERF will send email receipts when LOIs and proposals are received. If the applicant does not receive a receipt, he or she should call or email the Research Committee Chair to verify receipt of documents within one week of the deadlines. One week after the deadline, any lost LOIs or proposals will not be considered for funding.

## **Review Process**

All OPERF Award submissions will be reviewed by a Review Panel composed of OPERF Research Committee members and ad-hoc members, as needed. Composition of the panel will be determined by the type and number of award submissions. The OPERF Research Committee Chair will serve as the Review Chair and serve as the point-of-contact for the Awards Program.

### **Function of the Review Panel**

The function of the Review Panel is to evaluate applications, including the clinical relevance of the research topic, the merit of the research design, and the appropriateness of the personnel and environment. The Review Panel will score Small Grant Award applications using the OPERF Review Form (available on the [OPERF website](#)).

All proposals will be administratively screened upon receipt for completeness and compliance with award requirements. Incomplete applications may be returned to the applicant without review. Complete applications will be assigned to two or more Review Panel members for review. Proposals will be evaluated and scored on scientific merit and clinical relevance to the O&P profession using the OPERF Review Form (available on the [OPERF website](#)). All submissions will be given a numerical score by each reviewer, and a consensus score will be generated. Blinded consensus scores, summary comments, and written reviews will be provided to all applicants upon completion of the review process.

OPERF reserves the right to reduce the terms of the award, both in time and in funds, as deemed appropriate by the scope of the proposed research. The Review Panel may also request that applicants respond to reviewer comments regarding any part of the submission prior to rendering a final award decision.

### **Conflict of Interest Procedures**

Review Panel and OPERF members involved in the Awards Program are required to maintain confidentiality regarding all aspects of the grant review process, the proposed projects, and the identity of award applicants. OPERF will strive to review all submissions fairly and without bias. In cases where a proposal is submitted by (1) a member of the Review Panel; (2) a Review Panel member’s organization; (3) a Review Panel member’s student, resident, or mentee; or (4) a Review Panel member’s colleague who lists the Review Panel member as having any responsibility or involvement in the project being reviewed or who collaborates or currently associates with the panel member in other capacities, which may or may not involve the application under consideration, the Review Panel member in question will be excused from review of the proposal.

When this situation applies to the Chair of the Research Committee, the Chair will turn over management of the review of the application in question to another Research Committee member. That Committee member will be responsible for identifying suitable reviewers; receiving from reviewers the OPERF Conflict of Interest, Confidentiality, and Non-Disclosure Statement and Review Forms; and chairing the portion of any review meeting during which the application in question is discussed. Furthermore, if the application in question is successfully funded, the Chair of the Research Committee will turn over management of the funded project to another member of the Research Committee. That Committee member will then be responsible for receiving and reviewing reports, confirming IRB approval (if applicable), and handling requests from the award recipient, as well as any issues that might arise with that particular project.

Reviewers for each application are required to complete the OPERF Conflict of Interest, Confidentiality, and Non-Disclosure Statement (available on the [OPERF website](#)) prior to review. If a submission includes proprietary or confidential information, this should be noted on the cover sheet and relevant sections of the proposal.

### Notification of Applicants

All applicants will be notified in writing of the status of their application following review. Notification will include the blinded consensus scores, summary comments, and written reviews. For the successful applicant, notification will also include information about how and when funds will be made available. Funds for the Small Grant Awards will be payable in two installments as described above under Award Specifics. Disbursement of the second installment is dependent upon submission of an adequate progress report to the OPERF Research Committee Chair. In cases where revisions to the progress report are needed, notification may include instructions and a deadline for the appropriate revisions. In such cases, award status may be listed as pending until satisfactory responses to comments are received.

### Final Report

Small Grant Award recipients are responsible for providing a final report to the OPERF Research Committee Chair (see Contact Information, below) within 30 days of conclusion of the funding period. The Small Grant Final Report should be 2–5 pages, single-spaced, and typed using 10–12-point font on pages with 1-inch margins.

Final Reports should detail the work performed during the study period, summarize the expenditure of the award budget, and include a list of any submitted and/or anticipated publications and further research directions, including additional grant opportunities that may result from the OPERF-funded research.

Any questions regarding the content or format of the Final Report may be directed to the OPERF Research Committee Chair.

### Resubmission

Proposals that are not awarded Small Grant funding may be resubmitted for another award cycle. A maximum of two resubmissions following the original submission will be accepted. The applicant is responsible for resubmitting the proposal using any updated instructions provided on the OPERF website. The cover letter should indicate that the proposal is a resubmission, and a separate document should indicate any changes made to the proposal in response to reviewer concerns from the previous submission. This document should be no more than two pages in length (page count is not included in the submission page limit).

### No-Cost Extension

A one year no-cost extension may be applied for by investigators who have been awarded a Small Grant in the event that their project requires additional time to complete or if additional time is required to prepare for presentation at the AAOP Annual Meeting. A written request for a no-cost extension must be submitted to the OPERF Research Committee Chair one month prior to expiry of the current award. If the extension affects the timing of an AAOP Annual Meeting presentation, the Award recipient must inform the Chair at least two months prior to the AAOP Annual Meeting.

### Complimentary Funding/Support

OPERF Small Grant Award applicants are required to identify existing and/or pending funding related to the application. If complimentary funding is obtained by the investigator prior to award announcement or during the award period, award recipients are required to inform the OPERF Research Committee Chair (see Contact Information, below) in writing. When contacting the OPERF Research Committee Chair, investigators are encouraged to submit a modified budget that reflects the complimentary support obtained for the proposed research. OPERF reserves the right to modify the provided funding based on the receipt of alternative support received by the investigator(s). Decisions regarding the modification of funding will be approved by the OPERF Board of Directors. If a modification to the funding amount is made after the disbursement of funds, OPERF reserves the right to request that funds be returned.

### Instructions and Forms

Instructions and forms for submission of proposals are available online ([www.OPERF.org](http://www.OPERF.org)). Submissions may be made by email only. Applicants are responsible for confirming all materials are received by the due dates.

### Ownership of Work

Ownership of intellectual property arising from OPERF-sponsored funding is vested in the award recipient, per the policies of the applicant's host institution. OPERF reserves the right to publicize all materials received in the course of funding a particular project; e.g., proposals, progress reports, final reports, AAOP Annual Meeting abstracts, etc., with the exception of materials marked "confidential" or "proprietary."

Award recipients are required to acknowledge OPERF funding in any publication or presentation of the funded research by including the following statement: *"This presentation/work was supported (or "supported in-part" if the project was also supported by other sources) through funds from the Orthotic and Prosthetic Education and Research Foundation, Inc. (OPERF)."*

## **Funding Cycle**

The following are key dates and deadlines for the OPERF Small Grant Awards Program. Applicants are responsible for ensuring all materials are received by OPERF by the due dates.

- LOI due ..... December 11
- Proposals due ..... January 15
- Award notification ..... April 1\*
- Funding disbursed ..... May 27\*

\*Award notification and funding disbursement dates are approximate and based on anticipated number of submitted applications. A greater number of submissions than expected may delay notification. Applicants will be notified in writing if delays occur.

## **Contact Information**

All requests for additional information may be addressed to:

Small Grant Award Program  
c/o Stefania Fatone, PhD, BPO (Hons)  
Orthotic and Prosthetic Education and Research Foundation  
P.O. Box 34635  
Washington, DC 20043-4635  
phone: (312) 503-5717  
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