



AMERICAN OTOLOGICAL SOCIETY RESEARCH FOUNDATION

Letter of Intent (LOI) Frequently Asked Questions & Grant Mechanism Selection Guide

2027–2028 Grant Cycle

Purpose. This guide is intended to help prospective applicants determine whether they are eligible for an AOS Research Fund award, select the most appropriate funding mechanism, and prepare a Letter of Intent. Applicants should review the current AOS grant instructions for the specific mechanism before submission.

PART I. LETTER OF INTENT (LOI) – FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. Is a Letter of Intent required?

Yes. A Letter of Intent (LOI) is required for AOS Research Fund applications. Following LOI review, selected applicants will be invited to submit a full application.

2. What are the key dates for the 2027–2028 cycle?

Letter of Intent deadline: November 1, 2026. Invitations to submit a full application: first week of December 2026.
Full application deadline: January 31, 2027.

3. Which AOS funding mechanisms are available?

The AOS Research Fund currently lists five mechanisms: Clinician-Scientist Award, Research Grant Award, Clinical Investigation, Research Training Fellowship, and Multi-Centered Clinical Cooperative Seed Grant. Applicants should identify the intended mechanism in the LOI.

4. What should be included in the LOI?

Submit the LOI materials as ONE PDF. The submission should include:

- Cover letter
- Letter of Intent, identifying:
 - Desired AOS grant mechanism
 - Principal Investigator (*only one PI per LOI*)
 - Institution(s)
 - Working title
- Abstract and Specific Aims — limited to two pages total
- Proposal summary — two pages
- PI biosketch using the NIH template, including details regarding existing research support and any potential overlap with the applicant's mentor(s)

Biosketches for other personnel are optional at the LOI stage but will be required if the applicant is invited to submit a full application.

The LOI should be formatted in 11-point Arial font with 0.5-inch margins, with the Principal Investigator's name appearing on each page. Submit the complete package as one Adobe PDF, saved using the grant mechanism and PI's last name.

5. What types of research are within the scope of the AOS Research Fund?

Research may address any topic related to the ear and may include basic, translational, clinical, outcomes, health services, educational, or related research. The work does not have to directly study an otologic disease; it may examine normal cochlear, labyrinthine, central auditory, or vestibular function. The proposal should clearly explain how the work may ultimately improve understanding, diagnosis, prevention, or treatment of otologic disorders or patient care.

6. I already have research funding. Am I eligible?

Under the General Policies in the current AOS grant instructions, applicants with significant funding from any federal agency for any project - even a non-overlapping project - are ineligible for AOS support. An annual federal award of \$100,000 or greater is defined as significant. Funding from another source, including foundations, corporations, or the applicant's home institution, also prevents AOS support when it overlaps with the proposed AOS project. All existing support should be disclosed in the biosketch.

7. Does the \$100,000 federal funding threshold apply only to overlapping research?

No. Under the General Policies in the current AOS grant instructions, an annual federal award of \$100,000 or greater is considered significant even when the federally funded project does not overlap with the proposed AOS project.

8. What if I am a co-investigator, collaborator, or recipient of a subaward on a federal grant?

The current instructions do not separately define how the \$100,000 threshold should be applied to a co-investigator, collaborator, or subaward recipient. Disclose the federal award, your role, and the support attributable to you, and request an eligibility determination from AOS before preparing the LOI if applicability is unclear.

9. What if I have a federal grant application pending?

The current instructions require disclosure of existing support but do not specifically state that a pending federal application makes an applicant ineligible. Disclose the pending application and notify AOS if it becomes funded, particularly if the new award could affect eligibility or overlap with the proposed AOS project.

10. Are institutional startup funds or departmental research funds allowed?

Institutional or other non-federal support is not automatically disqualifying under the General Policies. However, an applicant may not request AOS support for a project that overlaps with funding from another source, including a home academic institution. Relevant support should be disclosed.

11. May I submit the same or a related project to another funding organization?

The current instructions do not prohibit having another application pending, but AOS funds may not support a project that overlaps with funding already received from another source. Disclose related pending or active support and request clarification if potential overlap exists.

12. Do I have to be an AOS member?

AOS membership is specifically required for the Principal Investigator of the Multi-Centered Clinical Cooperative Seed Grant. A minimum of three collaborating sites is required, but Site PIs are not required to be AOS members. The other mechanisms have their own eligibility requirements; review the mechanism-specific instructions.

13. Can PhD investigators apply?

Yes, for mechanisms that permit PhD applicants. The Research Grant is open to faculty with an MD and/or PhD, and the Fellowship Grant includes post-doctoral fellows with MD or PhD degrees. Pre-doctoral candidates are not eligible. The Clinician-Scientist Award requires an MD or equivalent degree and additional clinical and career-stage qualifications.

14. Does the research need to be performed in an Otolaryngology department?

Not necessarily. The proposed research must be relevant to the mission of the AOS Research Fund. Appropriate collaborators may come from other departments and disciplines.

15. Are investigators outside the United States eligible?

For the Research Grant, Fellowship Grant, and Clinical Investigations Grant, the AOS FAQ states that grant mechanisms are open to post-doctoral candidates (MDs, PhDs) from institutions in the United States and Canada. The Clinician-Scientist Award is more restrictive: applicants must hold a full-time teaching appointment in a U.S. medical school and be U.S. citizens or lawful permanent residents at the time of application. Review the selected mechanism's instructions before submitting.

16. What does the Research Advisory Board consider during LOI review?

The official instructions describe mechanism-specific review criteria. In general, the proposed work must be relevant to otology/neurotology and explain how it will benefit understanding, diagnosis, or treatment of otological disorders. An LOI invitation permits submission of a full application; final funding decisions occur only after full application review by the Research Advisory Board and approval by the AOS Council.

17. What should I do if my funding situation is unusual or I am unsure whether I am eligible?

Contact AOS before the November 1 LOI deadline. Provide the proposed grant mechanism, academic position and institution, current research awards and funding sources, your role on each award, annual support attributable to you, and whether any support overlaps with the proposed AOS project. This is especially important when the current instructions do not expressly address your funding arrangement.

PART II. WHICH AOS GRANT MECHANISM IS RIGHT FOR ME?

The table below is a quick orientation based on the current AOS Research Grants webpage. Mechanism-specific instructions govern if there is any discrepancy.

Grant Mechanism	Best Fit / Purpose	Maximum Award	Key Eligibility & Considerations
Clinician-Scientist Award	Early-career MD clinician-scientists pursuing mentored research and a career in otology/neurotology.	Up to \$240,000 total – \$80,000/year for up to 3 years	U.S. medical-school teaching appointment; U.S. citizen/permanent resident; MD/equivalent within last 10 years; 50% research effort required. Prior successful career-development award is disqualifying.
Research Grant Award	Faculty investigators, MD and/or PhD, proposing focused basic, translational, or clinical research relevant to ear disorders.	\$55,000 for 1 year – \$50,000 direct + \$5,000 indirect	Designed for a focused research project. Applicants should carefully review AOS restrictions regarding existing federal funding and overlapping support.
Clinical Investigation	Investigators developing a clinical research project and preliminary data for a larger NIH-style clinical study.	\$66,000 for 1 year – \$60,000 direct + \$6,000 indirect	Emphasis on clinical project development and preliminary data. May be competitively renewed through a new application.
Research Training Fellowship	Clinical fellows, residents, and post-doctoral fellows (MD or PhD) seeking mentored research training.	\$44,000 for 1 year – \$40,000 direct + \$4,000 indirect	Pre-doctoral candidates are not eligible. Appropriate mentorship and a suitable research environment are required.
Multi-Centered Clinical Cooperative Seed Grant	Investigators building a multi-site clinical collaboration in otology/neurotology and the infrastructure needed for larger studies.	\$55,000 for 1 year – no indirect costs	Overall, PI must be an AOS member; minimum 3 collaborating sites; Site PIs need not be AOS members; neither overall PI nor Site PIs may be trainees. Concurrent R13 support is permitted subject to mechanism rules.

A quick decision pathway

- Are you an early-career otologist/neurotologist with an MD or equivalent degree, a full-time teaching appointment in a U.S. medical school, and a goal of developing an independent clinician-scientist career? -> Consider the Clinician-Scientist Award.

- Are you proposing a focused hypothesis-driven basic, translational, or clinical research project? → Consider the Research Grant Award.
- Is your primary goal to develop a clinical project and obtain preliminary data for a larger NIH-style clinical investigation? → Consider Clinical Investigation.
- Are you a clinical fellow, resident, or post-doctoral fellow (MD or PhD) seeking mentored research support? -> Consider the Research Training Fellowship. Pre-doctoral candidates are not eligible.
- Are you an AOS member building a multi-institutional clinical collaboration with at least three sites? -> Consider the Multi-Centered Clinical Cooperative Seed Grant. Neither the overall PI nor Site PIs may be trainees.

Eligibility questions that should be clarified before submission

Applicants should seek an eligibility determination in advance when any of the following applies:

- Active federal research support near or above the AOS eligibility threshold.
- Federal support as a co-investigator, subaward recipient, or other role where the amount attributable to the applicant is unclear.
- An active career-development award (for example, a federal K award).
- Potential scientific or budgetary overlap with another active or pending award.
- Uncertainty regarding career-stage, degree, membership/sponsorship, institutional, citizenship, or geographic requirements for the selected mechanism.

Information to include when requesting an eligibility determination

- Proposed AOS grant mechanism
- Current academic position and institution
- Current research awards and funding sources
- Role on each award
- Annual amount of support attributable to the applicant
- Any scientific or budgetary overlap with the proposed AOS project

Important note for applicants. This FAQ and selection guide are a practical aid and do not replace the official, mechanism-specific AOS grant instructions. Where AOS source materials contain inconsistent language, the current posted instructions and an eligibility determination by the AOS Research Advisory Board should govern before submission.

Source: AOS grant instructions-revised 2026-FINAL and AOS Grant Mechanisms FAQ, reviewed for the 2027-2028 LOI cycle.