

# Application guidelines for scientific research grants

WADA promotes and funds [Scientific Research Projects](#) on development or optimization of analytical tools for the detection of doping substances or methods, growth of the Athlete Biological Passport, the pharmacology of prohibited substances and of drug combinations, evaluation of doping potential and anti-doping testing programs.

Since 2001, the Annual Call for Proposals has been the main program through which researchers have been able to submit grant applications, operating with a single deadline every year. To promote a more dynamic and attractive research program, WADA has moved in 2024 to [a new year-round grant application system](#), based on Expression of Interest (EOI) submission as a first step, followed by an invitation to submit a full application for selected research teams. Under this system, researchers are welcome to submit EOIs at any time during the year. Three cycles are scheduled annually, to correspond to WADA's Executive Committee (ExCo) meetings.

In addition, and to complement the year-round call for proposals, WADA will continue to release special calls for projects when topics of interest are identified. Open topics will be listed on the WADA website, with detailed requests for applications.

## 1. Deadlines for the Scientific Research Grants

Deadlines for EOI and full application submission are published annually in the [Call for proposals for the Scientific Research Grant Program](#). A table presenting these deadlines is also maintained on [WADA's website](#).

## 2. Submission process

Research teams are invited to submit EOIs at any time of the year, using the [WADA Grants](#) platform, and are required to include a short description of the following items:

- a. A brief project summary, which includes: background, aims, experimental design [analytical method, type and origin of samples and variables to be studied], deliverables and anticipated outcomes (500 words max.);
- b. Preliminary results (if available, 200 words max.);
- c. Description of benefits to anti-doping (200 words max.);
- d. Research team expertise (200 words max.);
- e. Project duration and budget;
- f. Information about previous submissions and projects;
- g. Applicants information.

After the review of the EOIs by experts, an EOI decision letter is sent to the applicants by email. A resubmission of an EOI will only be considered if it has been improved by considering all the shortcomings noted during the previous reviewing process. A description of the main changes from the previous submission will be required in WADA Grants.

When an applicant is invited to submit a full application, the following enclosures will be requested:

- a. A project description (maximum five pages) including:

- i. Aims;
  - ii. Methods (study design, study participants and samples, targets/analytes/variables, analytical methods, statistical analysis plan);
  - iii. Deliverables and anticipated outcomes;
  - iv. Timelines;
  - v. Preliminary results;
  - vi. Relevant bibliographical references;
- b. Information about the researchers (*curriculum vitae*), their home institution and resources;
  - c. A detailed budget;
  - d. For research involving human subjects and/or human samples (including existing material), a copy of the local ethics committee approval, participant information letter and consent form;
  - e. For research involving animals: a copy of animal care committee approval.

If d) or e) documents are pending at the time of submission, WADA may approve the proposal for funding contingent upon ethics review; however, these documents will be required once the grant is approved.

Full applications are also submitted on the [WADA Grants](#) platform.

EOIs and full applications must be submitted in English. All other relevant documents should be translated if originals are in a language other than English.

The signature section of the application form should be signed by all investigators and submitted using the [WADA Grants](#) platform. Electronic signatures are acceptable.

Applicants are encouraged to contact WADA ([science@wada-ama.org](mailto:science@wada-ama.org)) for assistance with composition of the research team and access to biological samples, as well as other technical aspects.

### 3. Review process

EOIs and full applications are reviewed by external independent reviewers as well as WADA's Science and Medicine experts. A minimum of two written reviews are obtained for each EOI/full application. The final ranking and recommendations are established by the WADA Health, Medical and Research Committee prior to the ExCo's approval.

The relevant criteria for the selection of EOIs and full applications are the scientific quality and relevance to WADA's goals.

More specifically, EOIs are reviewed based on the following criteria:

- a. Clarity of objectives;
- b. Suitability of the experimental protocol and study design;
- c. Previous work and/or preliminary results supporting the positive outcome of the proposal;
- d. Likelihood of success;
- e. Relevance to the fight against doping;
- f. Expertise and track record of the principal investigator and co-applicants;
- g. Appropriateness of the preliminary budget and project duration.

The full applications are then reviewed based on the same criteria, as well as additional ones:

- h. Applicability of anticipated results in the near future;
- i. Appropriateness of facilities, equipment and services to be employed for the proposed activities.

Given that more details about the project plan (e.g., population studied, samples collected, methodology employed) are provided in the full application than in the EOI, a more thorough review of these aspects is done at that stage.

#### 4. Funding

The duration of the scientific research grants can be from 1 to 3 years maximum. There is no maximum budget limit, and amounts are varying depending on the nature and length of the project. For example, in 2023, average and median grant values were of US \$115k and \$100k, respectively, with individual awards ranging from US \$35k and \$500k.

A detailed budget must be submitted at the full application stage, with details on:

- a. Personnel costs (salaries for scientific and technical staff);
- b. Consumables;
- c. Equipment (major equipment expenses should be justified and accompanied by an estimate);
- d. Travel expenses (conferences/symposia/workshops);
- e. Subject recruitment and clinical studies;
- f. Additional expenses.

Overheads are capped to a maximum of 20% of the budget.

A template for budget is provided in WADA Grants.

#### 5. Longitudinal markers

If the proposed research includes analysis of longitudinal data of markers included in the Hematological, Endocrine or Steroidal Module (urine/blood) of the Athlete Biological Passport (ABP), the project may be eligible to apply the adaptive model of the ABP using the Anti-Doping Administration & Management System (ADAMS) training environment. To be eligible to use the adaptive model in ADAMS, the project should attempt to align the collection, transport, and analysis of samples with procedures described in relevant International Standards, Technical Documents and Laboratory Guidelines.

In the full application, specific questions about each ABP module (if relevant to the application) must be answered in WADA Grants. The answers provided should help WADA in verifying that all relevant procedures are strictly followed.

#### 6. Ethics review

Applicants should ensure that the proposed research complies with WADA [Research Ethics Policy](#).

All research that involves living human subjects, human tissues, biological fluids or animals require ethics review and approval before the research is started.

The applicant must inform in the full application form in WADA grants about the type of samples used for the proposed project and complete an ethics self-assessment. The documents to attach in the application are listed in section 2 above.