

Application guidelines for scientific research grants

Since 2001, WADA has promoted and funded Scientific Research Projects. Attention has been directed towards the development and optimization of analytical tools for the detection of doping substances or methods, growth of the Athlete Biological Passport (ABP), the pharmacology of prohibited substances and drug combinations, and the assessment of doping potential.

The Call for Proposals is based on Expression of Interest (EOI) submission as a first step, followed by an invitation to submit a full application for selected research teams. EOIs can be submitted at any time during the year. Three review cycles are scheduled annually, to correspond to WADA's Executive Committee (ExCo) meetings, and decision letters are sent to applicants shortly after these meetings.

In addition, 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 on the [WADA 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 applicants by email. A resubmission of an EOI will only be considered if it has been improved by addressing 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. *Ethics documents: 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. For research involving animals, a copy of animal care committee approval.

*If Ethics 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 full 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) for assistance with composition of the research team and access to biological samples, as well as other technical aspects.

Applicants are encouraged to consult with anti-doping laboratories (e.g., [WADA-accredited laboratories](#)) or [anti-doping organizations](#) during development of the research plan to help ensure practical applicability of the research.

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.

Priority is given to research projects with **direct and immediate applicability**, favoring translational projects over basic research (which is rarely funded). Proposals should go beyond the discovery phase, ideally involve human studies, and deliver concrete outcomes by the end of the funding period.

The relevant criteria for the selection of EOIs and full applications are 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 vary depending on the nature and length of the project. For example, in 2024, average and median grant values were US \$88k and \$95k, respectively, with individual awards ranging from US \$27k to \$200k.

A detailed budget (in US dollars) 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 budgets 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 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's [Research Ethics Policy](#).

All research that involves living human subjects, human tissues, biological fluids, or animals requires ethics review and approval before the research is started (applications are accepted without the ethics approval). The applicant must report on the full application form in WADA grants 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.