

AMSSM CRN REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

AMSSM CRN BACKGROUND AND SUMMARY

In July 2016, the American Medical Society of Sports Medicine (AMSSM) launched one of its largest initiatives to date, the Collaborative Research Network (CRN). The mission of the CRN is to foster collaborative research among AMSSM members to advance the clinical practice of sports medicine. In efforts to attain this goal, the CRN, in conjunction with the AMSSM Foundation, releases this request for proposals to help facilitate and fund promising research studies in relevant topic areas related to the practice of sports medicine. The ultimate objective of this research program is to foster research that will inform the clinical practice of AMSSM members and will help establish AMSSM as a leader in sports medicine research.

General Summary

Published Date: March 2026

Letter of Intent due: July 13, 2026

Full Application due: October 12, 2026 (invitation only)

Letters of intent (LOI) will be reviewed in relation to the criteria outlined in the RFP. Only applications selected after initial review will be allowed to submit a full application. The invitation to submit a full proposal will be sent to investigators no later than August 10, 2026. An invitation to submit a full proposal does not guarantee a research award.

Summary: The AMSSM CRN seeks to fund a collaborative research project that addresses clinical questions related to the practice of sports medicine and the care of patients. Proposed studies must be collaborative in nature and must be relevant to the clinical practice of AMSSM physicians.

Eligibility: All PIs must be active members of AMSSM in good standing (a PI who is not an AMSSM member is acceptable if a co-PI is an AMSSM member). PIs from both private practice and academic institutions are eligible and encouraged to apply. Proposals should demonstrate collaboration with the CRN and/or other research stakeholders and lead to the improvement of clinical practice in sports medicine.

Key dates: All deadlines are at 5pm ET unless otherwise specified:

LOI Request for CRN Collaboration Deadline: June 1, 2026

LOI Deadline: July 13, 2026

LOI Status Notification: August 2026

Full Application Request for CRN Collaboration Deadline: September 14, 2026

Full Application Deadline: October 12, 2026

Award Announcements: December 2026

Maximum Project Budget: \$400,000 for up to 2 years

Maximum Project Timeline: 2 years

Available Templates: Full Application Cover Page, Biographical Sketches

APPLICATION PROCESS

Overview: This RFP will involve a two-stage submission process. The first stage will require an LOI application, which will be reviewed by a scientific review panel based on the criteria outlined below. Successful LOI applications will be invited to submit a full application, which will be reviewed by an extended panel of reviewers as commissioned by the AMSSM CRN. The panel will include experts in the field, established researchers, community advisors, and members of AMSSM leadership and the Research Committee. Finalists will be presented to the AMSSM Board of Directors for approval before awards are announced.

Eligibility: In addition to meeting all specified requirements for a complete LOI and/or Full application, proposals and investigators must adhere to the following criteria to be eligible for this RFP:

- All PIs must be active members of AMSSM in good standing (a PI who is not an AMSSM member is acceptable if a co-PI is an AMSSM member)
- PIs and Co-Investigators may be from academic institutions and/or private practice
- Proposals must involve multi-site collaboration or provide the framework for future multi-site collaboration. Proposals should be relevant to the improvement of the clinical practice of sports medicine

Collaboration: Collaboration is a vital component of successful research projects and will be a scoring requirement for this RFP. Collaboration may be demonstrated in many ways, including (but not limited to) partnership with the CRN (encouraged) or collaborations among multiple sites, with interdisciplinary co-investigators, or with community stakeholders.

Collaboration with the CRN: In conjunction with its mission to foster collaborative research that ultimately advances the practice of sports medicine, the AMSSM CRN actively promotes collaboration and engagement with the research network. The CRN can offer valuable **post-award** resources to help investigators, including those in private practice, navigate the complexities of research and ensure CRN-affiliated research is conducted with the highest quality and rigor possible. The following are examples of CRN resources available to investigators following the review process and notification of award:

- Research coordination and project management*
- Comprehensive biostatistical support*
- Assistance with central data storage, management, and coordination*
- DSMB coordination and support

This support should be written into your budget. Please talk with AMSSM Research Program Manager, Sarah Sund, if you are interested in these services for your proposal and need help with these line items for budget development **by June 1, 2026, for the LOI and by September 14, 2026, for the full proposal.*

Investigators are encouraged to think carefully about how the CRN could be most helpful and valuable in the conduct and successful completion of their proposed research study and explicitly identify potential collaboration with the CRN in the proposal. Questions regarding opportunities for CRN engagement, including opportunities not listed above, are encouraged and can be directed to the AMSSM Research Director, Stephanie Kliethermes (skliethermes@amssm.org), at any stage of the application process.

Note on multi-site collaboration: This RFP will support either single-site or multi-site applications. Although multi-site proposals often yield stronger and more generalizable research outcomes, strong single-site proposals can also contribute significantly to the field. Regardless of the study design, all proposals must contain a section identifying the importance of collaboration to the project. One of the goals of the CRN is to foster collaborative multi-site research networks; therefore, all else being equal, there is a preference for proposals that initiate new or extend current, collaborative multi-site research networks.

Review Criteria: To encourage consistent, fair, and reliable review of proposals, this RFP will follow an adapted NIH Simplified Framework for critique and scoring based on the scientific merit of proposals. Proposals will also be assessed for programmatic alignment with the clinical practice of AMSSM members. Letters of Intent and full applications will be scored according to the criteria identified below. Reviewers consider Factors 1, 2, and 3 in the determination of scientific merit and in providing an overall impact score. In addition, Factors 1 and 2 each receive a separate criterion score between 1-9.

Factor 1: Importance of the Research [Criterion Score 1-9]:

- a. Significance:** Proposals will be evaluated for the importance of the proposed study to the practice of sports medicine in the context of current scientific and clinical challenges and opportunities. Proposals should address an important gap in knowledge in the field and/or have the potential to contribute to the improvement of clinical practice. Proposals will also be evaluated for the rationale provided for undertaking the study, the rigor of the scientific background (e.g., prior literature and/or preliminary data), and whether the scientific background justifies the proposed study.
- b. Innovation:** Proposals will be evaluated for the extent to which innovation influences the importance of undertaking the proposed study. Innovation may include novel concepts, methods or technologies or use existing concepts, methods, technologies in novel ways to enhance the overall impact of the project. Technical or conceptual innovation can influence the importance of the proposed research; however, a proposal that does not apply novel concepts or approaches may still be critically important to advancing the clinical practice of sports medicine.

Factor 2: Rigor and Feasibility [Criterion Score 1-9]: Proposals will be evaluated for their scientific quality, including rigor and feasibility.

- a. Rigor:** Evaluation of rigor includes (1) the potential of the proposed study to produce unbiased, reproducible, robust data; (2) appropriateness of study design to the research question; (3) assessment of proposed sample size and accompanying justification; (4) quality of proposed analytic approach – including interpretation and reporting of results; (5) justification for selected outcome variables; (6) generalizability of results, or relevance to particular subgroups of interest; (7) appropriate inclusion/exclusion criteria (for clinical trials only)
- b. Feasibility:** Evaluation of feasibility includes whether the proposed approach is sound and achievable, including plans to address problems or new challenges that may emerge during the study. Proposals where feasibility may be less certain will be evaluated whether the uncertainty is balanced by the potential for major advances. Adequacy and feasibility of the recruitment and retention plan in appropriately diverse populations of participants will be assessed. Additionally, proposals will be evaluated for their likelihood of successfully achieving proposed enrollment based on appropriate age, racial, ethnic and sex categories for the research question. The feasibility of study timelines and milestones will also be considered.

Factor 3: Expertise and Resources [Appropriate/Not Appropriate]:

- a. Investigator(s):** Proposals will be evaluated as to whether the investigator(s) have demonstrated background, training, and expertise, as appropriate for their career stage, to conduct the proposed study. For Multiple Principal Investigator (MPI) applications should include a leadership plan that describes how coordination and collaboration will be facilitated.
- b. Environment:** Proposals will be evaluated as to whether identified institutional resources are appropriate to ensure the successful execution of the proposed study.

Overall Impact Score [Criterion Score 1-9]: Factors 1, 2, and 3 will be considered when determining the scientific merit of the proposed study and in providing an overall impact score. The overall impact score is not an average of Factors 1 and 2.

Criterion Scoring: Criterion scores will involve whole numbers only. A score of 5 indicates a good, medium-impact application and is considered an average score. An application does not need to be strong in all categories to be judged likely to have a major scientific impact on the clinical practice of sports medicine. Reviewers will be asked to utilize the entire scoring range.

Degree of Impact	Impact Score	Descriptor	Additional Guidance on Strengths/Weaknesses
High	1	Exceptional	Exceptionally strong with essentially no weaknesses
	2	Outstanding	Extremely strong with negligible weaknesses
	3	Excellent	Very strong with only some minor weaknesses
Moderate	4	Very Good	Strong but with numerous minor weaknesses
	5	Good	Strong but with at least one moderate weakness
	6	Satisfactory	Some strengths but also some moderate weaknesses
Low	7	Fair	Some strengths but with at least one major weakness
	8	Marginal	A few strengths and a few major weaknesses
	9	Poor	Very few strengths and numerous major weaknesses
Definitions: Minor: Easily addressable weakness that does not substantially lessen the impact of the project. Moderate: Weakness that lessens the impact of the project. Major: Weakness that severely limits the impact of the project.			

Additional Review Criteria: Other review criteria will not be scored but will be considered as part of the overall impact score. These criteria include adequate protection of human subjects (including risk and protection against risk, potential benefits, and importance of knowledge gained), and an appropriate budget and budget justification.

Number of submissions: There is no limit to the number of proposals any one investigator, practice, or institution may submit or co-investigate in response to this RFP; however, all requirements must be upheld to include being an AMSSM member in good standing for all PIs and a plan for purposeful collaboration.

Intellectual property, data, and confidentiality: Investigators retain all intellectual property developed under this award. AMSSM makes no claim to data ownership. Additionally, there is a clear and strong expectation that the work will lead to future extramural funding requests. AMSSM CRN anticipates a collaborative role in assisting with the development of future funding requests.

Human Subjects Approval: Prior Institutional Review Board approval is not required at the time of submission; however, no funds will be disbursed for research purposes until IRB approval is received by AMSSM. Proof of IRB approval will be required within six months of acknowledgement of approval of the award. If you do not have an Institutional Review Board, review of your project by your hospital Human Subjects Committee or equivalent is required for funding. If your hospital or private practice does not have a Human Subjects committee or equivalent, please contact the AMSSM Research Program Manager prior to submission (ssund@amssm.org) to determine alternative options. It is the sole responsibility of the principal investigator(s) and their institution(s) to ensure the work is carried out within the required guidelines.

Timeline and Award Notification: All LOIs submitted in response to this RFP will be due no later than 5pm ET on the deadline listed under Key Dates. After completion of the initial screening process, all applicants will receive a LOI status notification. Those applicants invited to submit a full application must submit a complete application by the deadline listed under Key Dates. Award recipients, upon approval of the AMSSM Board of Directors, will be announced.

Progress Reports: Progress reports, including annual expenditures, must be submitted to the AMSSM CRN at the conclusion of each year of the study. Any balance of more than \$200 must be refunded to AMSSM within 60 days of project completion. A no-cost extension of unused funds will be considered with appropriate justification and rationale provided by the PI. For 2-year awards, funding for year-2 will be dependent upon review of the progress report by the CRN. A final progress report, including all expenditures, should be submitted to the AMSSM CRN within 90 days of study completion and should include a brief description of study results and the significance of findings. Additionally, as part of the Final Progress Report, grant recipients will be asked to provide a brief reflection on how they believe their study outcomes may impact policy & practice within Sports Medicine. This summary will be shared with the AMSSM Director of Policy and Advocacy, Brian Williams, and the leadership of the Practice and Policy Committee for review. They may reach out to authors for future collaborations related to the study. Any major changes to the study protocol should be discussed with the CRN and must be submitted in writing to the CRN within 30 days of the changes taking place. Communications and progress reports should be sent to the CRN Research Program Manager: ssund@amssm.org.

Presentations and Publications: Award recipients are encouraged to submit their research for presentation at scientific meetings, including the AMSSM Annual Meeting. Winners will work with the CRN Leadership Committee to identify the most appropriate year for providing a project update to the AMSSM membership during the CRN mainstage session at an annual meeting. Additionally, the AMSSM CRN expects the timely publication of research results in appropriate peer-reviewed scientific journals. All publications resulting in whole or in part from the grant must include a statement similar to: ***“Funded in part by a grant from the American Medical Society for Sports Medicine (AMSSM) Foundation and Collaborative Research Network (CRN). The opinions expressed herein are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the AMSSM.”*** All presentations and posters should include a similar acknowledgement.

Instructions for Submitting Materials: All completed LOIs and full proposals must be submitted as one PDF through the appropriate channel on the AMSSM Grant Portal prior to the stated deadline(s). To begin an application, applicants can enter the grant portal via the CRN Grant mechanism on the AMSSM [research grants page](#).

RESEARCH INTEREST AREAS

The primary requirement is for competitive proposals to have the potential to impact the clinical practice of AMSSM sports medicine physicians. The practice of sports medicine involves myriad topics ranging from population-based physical activity and wellness to very specific conditions and injuries resulting from participation in sports and exercise. This RFP is designed to encourage research submissions covering a vast range of possible sports medicine topics and issues commonly encountered in clinical care. Current pressing areas of interest for clinical sports medicine include (but are not limited to) musculoskeletal health, cardiac screening, concussion, sports specialization, ultrasound, mental health, physical activity, osteoarthritis, injury prevention, running medicine, pain management, quality and value of sports medicine, and regenerative medicine/biologics. In addition to these traditional areas of strength, the CRN encourages novel and potentially highly impactful research proposals relevant to sports medicine.

AWARD MECHANISMS AND AMOUNTS

Overview: This RFP will award at least one research study up to a maximum of \$400,000 (including direct and indirect costs) over a study period of up to 2 years. Additional studies may be awarded based on the quality of proposed research, alignment with AMSSM-CRN research priorities, and the availability of appropriate research funds. Smaller projects in cost and duration are also encouraged. Although Institutional Review Board approval is not needed at the time of submission, no awarded research funds will be dispersed until IRB approval has been received by AMSSM.

Duration of Funded Research Programs: Proposed research projects should be completed within a maximum of 2 years, or for longer-term projects, the initial study aims and outcome measures should have produced meaningful results within this timeframe.

Overhead and Indirect Cost Limits: Per policy of the AMSSM CRN, **indirect costs will be capped at 15%**. Total requested funds, including direct and indirect costs, may not exceed \$400,000. The AMSSM CRN welcomes the use of matching institutional or other research funds, subject to prior approval of the AMSSM CRN leadership team. Salaries will not be capped.

Note for full applications only: AMSSM will allow up to 60% of total grant funds (i.e., \$240,000) to be available during the first year of the study. Approval for budgets requesting first-year funds to exceed \$240,000 will be considered on a case-by-case basis and must be sought before the full application is submitted. Requests to support budgets not meeting this requirement should be sent to the AMSSM Research Director: skliethermes@amssm.org, **by June 1, 2026, for the LOI and by September 14, 2026, for the full proposal.**

Acceptable Use of Research Funds: Research funds may be used to support investigator and research personnel salaries (including fringe benefits), costs of medical procedures required for study endpoints but not considered standard of care, expenses required for travel and communication between collaborating sites, and other necessary costs for clinical supplies. Funds may not be used for travel to conferences and other educational meetings or for courses and equipment purchases unnecessary for the implementation of study aims. As a general rule, equipment costing over \$500 is unlikely to be allowed by this funding mechanism.

Comprehensive budgets for each year of the research proposal must be provided with all full applications. LOIs should include approximate budget requirements for direct costs only.

LETTER OF INTENT APPLICATION:

Overview: The LOI is required as the first step in the RFP process. All sections of the LOI template must be answered completely. A cover page is not required for the LOI. Please review required components carefully; omitted or incomplete sections will result in the LOI not being reviewed. The goal of the LOI is for the CRN leadership team to understand the aims and approach of the study prior to reviewing a full application; therefore, focus should remain on important components of the proposed research study.

General guidelines

- Complete LOI should not exceed 4 pages in length (not including references)
- LOI should be in **PDF format**, 12-point font, and margins should be at a minimum of ½" on all sides
- All sections should be answered as clearly and thoroughly as possible
- Do not include supplemental material such as letters of support or supporting journal articles as part of the LOI submission

Components of LOI & Checklist:

PART I: Not to exceed 2 pages in length

- Title:** Specify the title of the proposed research study such that the proposed research topic addressed is easily identifiable.
- Relevance:** What aspect of the research topic does your study aim to address, and how will it provide evidence to fill existing knowledge gaps?
- Aims:** Identify the specific aims of the study.
- Methods:** This section should describe the study design and multi-site approach, including inclusion/exclusion criteria for the study population, primary outcomes to be measured, statistical approach, and sample size/power justification.
- Collaboration:** Identify a collaboration plan (with CRN, multiple sites, or otherwise) and the significance of collaboration for successfully completing the proposed research project.

PART II: Not to exceed 2 pages in length

- **Investigators:** A list of investigators, their affiliations, and roles on the projects, as well as any relevant experience, should be included.
- **Study Timeline and Approximate Budget:** This section should contain a proposed timeline for the research study and an approximate budget for direct costs only.

FULL APPLICATION:

Overview: The full application is only applicable for those invited to submit a full proposal based on the results of the LOI review process. All invited applications must be submitted through the Grant Portal.

General guidelines

- The application should be in **PDF format**, 12-point font, and a minimum of ½” margins on all sides
- Full applications should not exceed 13 pages in length (not including biosketches, references, and other relevant support). Specifically:
 - Cover Page: 1 page
 - Project Abstract: 1 page
 - Research Strategy: 6 pages
 - Timeline: 2 pages
 - Budget & Budget Justification: 2 pages
 - Dissemination Plan: 1 page
- Please number all pages
- **File size must not exceed 10MB.**

Components of Full Application & Checklist:

- **Cover Page** – The cover page should follow the template provided in this RFP and be completed in its entirety.
- **Project Abstract:** The abstract should describe the background and key objectives of the proposed research project. In addition, the research design and methods should be clearly identified with a statement of relevance to the practice of sports medicine within the chosen research topic priority area.
- **Research Strategy:** The research plan should not exceed 6 pages in length and include the following key areas: Introduction, Significance, Innovation, Collaboration Plan, and Approach. The introduction should clearly identify all primary and secondary aims as well as relevant hypotheses. Relevance to sports medicine clinical care and specific active populations should be included in the significance section. Innovative aspects of the project, including novel methods, analytic techniques, or interventions, should be identified. The collaboration plan should be explicitly described, including its significance to the proposed project. The approach should clearly outline the overall plan, methodology, and analysis proposed to achieve the specific aims. This section should include a description of the targeted patient population and sampling/recruitment strategy, statistical considerations including analytical approach and power/sample size justification, and finally limitations and potential alternative strategies to the approach. Preliminary data will lead to a stronger proposal, if available, but are not necessary for a competitive application.
- **Timeline:** Include a proposed timeline of key research milestones throughout the duration of the proposed project.
- **Project Budget with Justification:** A detailed budget, itemized by expense categories, should be supplied for each year of the proposed project. The budget should list the names and roles of all funded personnel to be involved in the project. In situations where an individual cannot be identified at the time of submission, providing the proposed position title and role is sufficient. Fringe benefit costs for the personnel may be included. Additionally, existing grants or other funding sources being utilized for the same project should be listed separately by briefly stating the funding agency, amount, and general description of how the funds will be utilized.

- **Dissemination Plan:** As part of the full proposal, applicants should submit a dissemination plan (no more than 1 page). This plan should include a description of where and when the results are expected to be published and/or presented, any other ways the team plans to share the work with the community, and the expected next steps in this line of research.
- **References**
- **Biographical Sketches:** Bio-sketches for all key study investigators (PIs and Co-Is) are required. Use of [SciENCv](#), a tool to develop and automatically format biosketches according to NIH requirements, is *strongly encouraged*. However, applicants may also use and adhere to the attached template. If using the provided template, applicants should include all pertinent appointments and qualifications, and a statement of purpose that identifies the investigator's strengths in answering this RFP as it relates to the chosen research topic. Only publications most relevant to the proposed research project are necessary.
- **Documentation of institutional and other relevant support:** This section should contain other documents pertinent to the proposed research project, including letters of support (e.g., from collaborators, institutions, clinics, etc.), proposed questionnaires/surveys, statements identifying conflicts of interest, etc.

Adherence to all requirements of the LOI and full application is essential; failure to comply will result in proposals not being scored.

QUESTIONS

All questions and clarifications related to this RFP or the CRN can be directed to the AMSSM Research Program Manager, Sarah Sund: ssund@amssm.org, phone: 608-265-0027.

AMSSM CRN Request for Proposals FULL APPLICATION COVER PAGE

Title of Research Project:

Primary Institution:

Principal Investigator(s):

Include name, title, institution, address, phone and e-mail

Budget Information:

Total Amount Requested (not more than 2 years): Total \$ _____ for ____ Years

Year 1: \$ _____

Year 2: \$ _____

OMB No. 0925-0001 and 0925-0002 (Rev. 10/2021 Approved Through 01/31/2026)

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Provide the following information for the Senior/key personnel and other significant contributors. Follow this format for each person. **DO NOT EXCEED FIVE PAGES.**

NAME:

eRA COMMONS USER NAME (credential, e.g., agency login):

POSITION TITLE:

EDUCATION/TRAINING (*Begin with baccalaureate or other initial professional education, such as nursing, include postdoctoral training and residency training if applicable. Add/delete rows as necessary.*)

INSTITUTION AND LOCATION	DEGREE (if applicable)	Completion Date MM/YYYY	FIELD OF STUDY

- A. Personal Statement
- B. Positions, Scientific Appointments, and Honors
- C. Contributions to Science