ORGANIZATION FOR AUTISM RESEARCH
"Research that helps families today."

2024 APPLIED RESEARCH COMPETITION
REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS
Applications due March 18, 2024

1. <u>Background</u>. The Organization for Autism Research (OAR) invites letters of intent for its 2024 Applied Research Competition. Through this competition, OAR seeks to promote evidence-based practices based on research in the following areas:

*   The analysis, evaluation, or comparison of current models of assessment, intervention, or systems of service delivery, including policy analysis
*   Applied aspects of educational, behavioral, or social/communicative intervention
*   Effective intervention across the lifespan for individuals considered severely affected by ASD
*   Issues affecting adults with autism such as continuing education, employment, residential supports, sexuality instruction, quality-of-life determinants, and services and supports for older autistic individuals
*   Issues related to family support, social and community integration, assessment and intervention with challenging behavior, and the use of technology in support of learners with ASD

2. <u>Objective</u>. OAR seeks to fund studies that expand the body of knowledge related to autism intervention and treatment, produce practical and clearly objective results, have the potential to positively affect public policy, and provide outcomes that offer to enhance quality of life for persons with autism and their families. While applicants are always free to submit on any relevant area of research or intervention, this year, OAR has placed special emphasis on research addressing the following areas:

*   Community-Engaged Research
*   Community-Based Assessment and Intervention
*   Community-Living and Supports
*   Gender, Reproductive, and Sexual Health
*   Physical Health and Mental Health
*   Improving Access to and Effectiveness of Existing Systems and Services
*   Intersectionality, Equity and Diversity
*   Mid-life and Older Adults

Study duration may range from one to two years.

3. <u>Eligibility</u>. At least one member of the research team must hold a Ph.D., M.D., or equivalent degree and maintain a faculty position or equivalent at a college, university, medical school, or other research facility. International researchers are eligible to apply.

4. <u>Evaluation Criteria</u>. OAR's Scientific Council and adjunct review panel will evaluate the letters of intent for scientific and technical merit. Review criteria for the evaluation include:

- **Significance** – Does the proposed topic address an important problem or address the needs of a currently underserved cohort of individuals? Will the study advance scientific knowledge in the field? Can the outcomes translate readily to support evidence-based practice? Does it have the potential to impact public policy?
- **Approach** - Are the proposed concepts, design, methods, and analyses adequate, clearly defined, and appropriate? Does the project account for potentially confounding variables?
- **Innovation** - Does the project employ novel approaches or methods? Are its aims original? Does it have the potential to advance our understanding of ASD?
- **Investigator** - Is the investigator and/or research team appropriately trained and well-suited to carry out the research?
- **Environment** - Does the scientific environment in which the work will take place contribute to its probability of success? Does the work take advantage of any unique features of the environment or employ useful collaborative arrangements?
- **Practical relevance -** How relevant are the study and anticipated outcomes to the everyday experiences of autistic individuals? Does it offer practical findings? Are they generalizable beyond the research setting? Can key components be readily replicated?

OAR's Board of Directors makes grant awards based on these evaluations and the recommendations of the Scientific Council. OAR places special emphasis on studies that will likely produce outcomes meaningful to the autism community and have potentially broad application to the practical issues autism presents.

5. <u>Competition.</u> With this year's competition, OAR will consider awarding up to 8 grant awards of $50,000 each. Letters of Intent are due by March 18, 2024. In May, OAR will invite selected applicants to submit full proposals, complete a final review in October, and announce grant recipients in December. OAR will notify all applicants of their status.

6. <u>Uses of OAR Funds</u>. Although OAR does not require a budget for the Letter of Intent, questions regarding OAR's funding policies often arise when prospective researchers initiate a grant proposal. All applicants should review OAR's funding guidelines before applying for a grant. The guidelines are posted on OAR's website. Studies designed to evaluate a potentially commercial product must include a strategic marketing plan for the product(s) and an acknowledgment that OAR will be reimbursed from the profits based upon a mutually agreed reimbursement plan.

7. <u>Application Timeline</u>. The application and review process will proceed in two distinct phases: (1) Letter of Intent and (2) invited proposals for final review.

   a. Letter of Intent (LOI)
   During this period, OAR will accept Letters of Intent prepared in accordance with the following guidelines. Interested researchers must submit a Letter of Intent via OAR's online application no later than **Monday, March 18, 2024 at 11:59pm EST**. Researchers may only

submit one LOI. Screening and review will begin immediately following the deadline. The objective of the initial review process is to identify those proposed studies which best meet the criteria described above; those studies will then advance to the full proposal phase. OAR will notify all applicants of the results in mid-May 2024.

b. Final Review
Once the LOI review is complete, OAR will invite selected researchers to submit full proposals for further review. The closing date for full proposals is **Monday**, **July 15, 2024.**

Following a preliminary peer review and scoring, OAR's Scientific Council will conduct the final review at its annual meeting in October. OAR's Board of Directors will meet at the same time, receive the report and recommendations of the Scientific Council, and approve the grant awards. **OAR will announce awardees in early December 2024; funding will begin on or after January 1, 2025.**

8. Application Process. This application is available online at https://researchautism.smapply.org/prog/2024_applied_research_competition.

Due to the increasing number of applications OAR receives each year, compliance with all administrative requirements is necessary.

  a. Application Tasks. The application tasks include:
  - o Basic Information – Study title (max 100 characters), Study start/end dates; amount of funds requested; study type; funding support; research population and topics
  - o Letter of Intent (see below)
  - o List of References
  - o Biosketches

  b. Overview of the Letter of Intent. The application process includes a Letter of Intent, identifying the research topic and describing the concept, design, and expected outcomes of the proposed study in limited form. OAR will review all LOIs to identify the studies that best meet the criteria described above; those studies will then advance to the full proposal phase. OAR will notify all LOI applicants of the results in mid-May 2024. Due to the overwhelming number of submissions, unsuccessful applicants will not receive reviewer feedback on their LOI.

  The Letter of Intent cannot exceed two (2) pages in length (not including references and biosketches) and must include the following:

  - o ***Summary Statement***: In a brief paragraph, explain what you want to do, how much money you are requesting, and over what time period you will conduct this research. Example:
    Dr. Jane Doe and her research team seek support to evaluate the efficacy of an innovative virtual reality program to support dating skills in young adults on the

autism spectrum. This project will be conducted over two years and we are requesting a total of $42,000.

o **Statement of Need:** In one to two paragraphs, this statement should explain more specifically what you are addressing and why you have chosen this topic. Avoid the standard generalizations. Narrow your focus to the most important literature that is needed to illustrate what is known in this research area. You should state why this research is important and how your project will improve the lives of people living with autism and/or their families. Highlight the most relevant background information available related to this project.

o **Specific Aims:** Clearly articulate the specific aims and measurable outcomes of the project.

o **Project Activity:** This section should provide a high-level narrative of the "how," "what," and "where" of the research proposal. It should include a 3-4-sentence overview of the methods, research design, intended subjects, setting, and evaluation/data analysis. Please note that specific details should be included in the attachment.

o **Statement of Impact:** In one to two paragraphs, state the specific outcomes you hope to achieve and how you will determine whether you have achieved them. State specific stakeholders that would be impacted.

o **Biographical Information:** Describe the personnel who will conduct this research and why they have the qualifications and capabilities to succeed. Upload a biosketch for each key personnel. For consistency, use the most recent NIH Biosketch version listed [here](#).

o **Statement of Innovation:** Indicate if this project is innovative in any way, and if so, how in specific terms.

o **References.** You may list up to 15 references supporting your plans. References do not count toward the page limit and must be presented in APA format.

For more information, contact OAR's Grants and Programs Associate, Vivian Muhumuza, at research@researchautism.org or 571-977-5391.