Synthesising the Evidence Grant 2026

Submission information

# Introduction

The RCOT Research and Innovation Fund supports the development of the evidence base for occupational therapy and the expansion of research capability and capacity within the profession.

With services increasingly commissioned based on evidence, occupational therapists are under growing pressure to demonstrate the effectiveness of their interventions. The RCOT Research and Innovation Fund Synthesising the Evidence Grant aims to extend the assimilation and development of the evidence base underpinning occupational therapy through providing funding for systematic reviews.

You can apply for up to £20,000 to support a systematic review. Please note we’ll only consider systematic reviews, and not other types of reviews such as scoping or rapid reviews.

We value the diversity of our membership, and we strongly encourage grant applications from all sections of our community, especially those from under-represented and minoritised groups. We are committed to improving the equity and inclusivity of our processes and all opportunities provided.

Application guidance

The application form is based on the *Preferred reporting items for systematic review and meta-analysis protocols* (PRISMA-P). You are strongly encouraged to read the following papers before beginning an application:

* + Moher D, Shamseer L, Clarke M, Ghersi D, Liberati A, Petticrew M,…the PRISMA-P Group (2015) Preferred reporting items for systematic review and meta-analysis protocols (PRISMA-P) 2015 statement. *Systematic Reviews, 4(1).* Available at:<https://systematicreviewsjournal.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/2046-4053-4-1>
  + Shamseer L, Moher D, Clarke M, Ghersi D, Liberati A, Petticrew M, …the PRISMA-P Group (2015) Preferred reporting items for systematic review and meta-analysis protocols (PRISMA-P) 2015: elaboration and explanation. *The BMJ, 350.* Available at: <https://www.bmj.com/content/349/bmj.g7647>

You must demonstrate compliance with GDPR and Data Protection Act 2018 and Research Governance Frameworks for Health and Social Care.

See below for guidance on different sections in the application form and how to submit your application.

**Rationale for being a research priority area**

Your proposal for the systematic review must address one or more of the [top 10 priorities for occupational therapy research](https://www.rcot.co.uk/top-10) in the UK.

**Public involvement and engagement**

Describe how people who access services and/or their families or carers, taking account of the perspectives of people from diverse backgrounds with multiple and intersecting identities[[1]](#footnote-2), have been involved in the design and will be involved in the execution of the project.

**Timeline**

Projects must be completed within 12 months. When thinking about a start date, please note it is unlikely that a contract will be in place before August.

**Funding requested**

We expect the funding section of the application form to include actual costs related to undertaking the project – for example, staff time costs, administrative costs and materials. As a registered charity we do not expect to fund university overheads.

Ensure you are compensating people with lived experience at the [NIHR benchmark rates](https://www.nihr.ac.uk/documents/payment-guidance-for-researchers-and-professionals/27392#payment-rates). If you are a doctoral student, your fees can be included. Inflation should be accounted for at your institution’s standard rate.

# Lead applicant

As the lead applicant, you must be a professional member of the British Association of Occupational Therapists (BAOT) at the time the proposal is submitted and for the duration of the funded project. You’ll demonstrate existing expertise in systematic reviews or include within the proposal a clear outline of how you’ll be supported to develop strong skills in this area.

RCOT employees and Council members are not eligible for the Synthesising the Evidence Grant.

# Collaborating partnerships

You may wish to include details of collaborative partnerships with other researchers contributing to the proposed project. Co-applicants who have an occupational therapy qualification and live in the UK must have BAOT membership. Co-applicants who are included because their lived experiences and/or background add value to the development and delivery of the proposal do not require BAOT membership even if they have an occupational therapy qualification.

# Completion and submission of proposals

* In sections where a word limit applies, please give the word count total for that section. The maximum word allowance stated is a fixed figure; it doesn’t include an additional 10% allowance. Exceeding the stated word allowance may result in your application being disqualified.
* All cited references should be listed within section 28 of the proposal form, where no word count applies.
* CVs and other documents should not be appended to the proposal form as these won’t be considered.
* You must have your proposal peer reviewed prior to submission. By peer review we mean that someone outside of the research team, but with research experience, has reviewed your application prior to its submission. Note this doesn’t need to be completed using RCOT’s reviewer form.
* You must submit the proposal form in Word format (**not PDF)**. The completed signature page may be submitted as a separate PDF.
* Submit completed proposals electronically to [R&IFund@rcot.co.uk](mailto:researchfoundation@rcot.co.uk) no later than 11.59pm on **Wednesday 25 February 2026.** Proposals received after this deadline won’t be considered.

The review process

Grant proposals will be reviewed by members of the RCOT Research and Innovation Fund Panel and an external expert identified by us.

Proposals will be reviewed against the following criteria:

* ability to address one or more of the [top 10 priorities for occupational therapy research](https://www.rcot.co.uk/top-10) in the UK
* methodological rigour
* involvement of people who access services, and/or their families or carers,taking account of the perspectives of people from diverse backgrounds with multiple and intersecting identities
* strength of collaborating partnerships (where relevant)
* track record of individual (and, where relevant, that of the supervisory support available)
* feasibility and value for money
* potential impact on practice
* institutional support.

If your proposal is highly rated and has potential for funding, you may be invited to respond to reviewers’ comments or to attend the Panel meeting to inform the final decision. The RCOT Research and Innovation Fund Panel will make the final recommendation for funding, subject to ratification by the RCOT Chief Executive.

The Research and Innovation Fund Panel meets in early June and we aim to notify you of the outcome, via email, by Friday 12 June 2026. We’ll provide formal written feedback to all applicants.

# Project management, contractual deliverables and grant payments

As the successful lead applicant (grant holder), you’ll assume responsibility for the day-to-day management of the systematic review and ensure that timescale milestones are met.

The following contractual deliverables will apply:

* as the lead applicant, sharing your ORCID ID with us for the purposes of tracking the impact of the grant
* demonstration that the project undertaken has fulfilled the research activity outlined in the project proposal
* submission of progress and impact report(s) during the project
* submission of a final project report and an updated progress and impact report within one month of the project end date. The final project report will be available via the RCOT Digital Library six months after the project is signed off
* submission of a systematic review paper to the British Journal of Occupational Therapy
* submission of a Summary of Key Findings for publication in the RCOT Digital Library and on the [RCOT website](https://www.rcot.co.uk/practice-resources/research-and-development#Funding%20for%20Research%20and%20Development)
* submission of impact reports 18 months and 3 years post-completion of the project
* supporting the promotion of the Research and Innovation Fund, where reasonably practical. This may include contributing promotional content such as quotes or testimonials for use in social or attending online events.

# Grant payments

We’ll pay the grant in instalments in line with the payment schedule set out in the grant contract/letter of agreement. Payment of the final instalment will normally be subject to sign off by us of all contractual deliverables, excluding the post-project impact reports and Research and Innovation Fund promotion.

**Further help and advice**

If you’d would like to discuss your project proposal, particularly if you have a question about the application process, please contact Angie Thompson, RCOT R&D Officer, in the first instance at: [angie.thompson@rcot.co.uk](mailto:angie.thompson@rcot.co.uk) or telephone: 020 3141 4615.

You can find other funding opportunities through the R&D Bulletin and discuss research opportunities and issues with other RCOT members via Research Connect. You can find out how to access both [here](https://www.rcot.co.uk/practice-resources/research-and-development#research-networking).

1. Agner, J (2020) The Issue Is – Moving from cultural competence to cultural humility in occupational therapy: A paradigm shift. *American Journal of Occupational Therapy, 74(4).*

   Hammell K (2013) Occupation, well-being, and culture: Theory and cultural humility. *Canadian Journal of Occupational Therapy 80(4).* [↑](#footnote-ref-2)