

STRIDE Mentored Research Scholarship (SMRS): FAQs

1. What is STRIDE?

STRIDE stands for Standing for Research Inclusion, Diversity, and Equity. It is the American Occupational Therapy Foundation's (AOTF) standing committee to develop, direct, and evaluate AOTF initiatives to promote diversity & belonging, combat racism, heal trauma, achieve equity, and social justice. STRIDE aims to identify and address any barriers in our community to full inclusion and learn more from our stakeholders about experiences that could inform us about how to do better and promote the kinds of reflections and insights that fuel change. While some of these actions build on existing initiatives within AOTF, others represent new steps that the Foundation will be enacting in direct response to recent events. Read the [full action plan](#).

2. I am an Occupational therapist working PRN/Per-Diem. Am I eligible to apply for the STRIDE OT Research Fund?

Yes, you are eligible to apply for the STRIDE Mentored Research Scholarship (SMRS) if you are a part-time AND/OR full-time clinician.

3. Application instructions state that faculty members may not apply. If I am not full-time faculty and have an adjunct faculty role, may I still apply?

If you are a part-time clinician with your adjunct faculty position teaching a clinical course, you may apply. You can reach out to us at research@aotf.org if you have questions regarding eligibility.

4. Can I apply if I am not from an under-represented background, with disabilities, and/or from under-resourced backgrounds?

No. The eligibility criteria for this award requires the applicant to be from an under-represented background, with disabilities, and/or from under-resourced backgrounds. Please refer to the following NSF & HRSA links regarding information on underrepresented groups: [Minorities](#) & [Underrepresented Minority](#).

5. I am an internationally trained OT with a bachelor's degree. Assuming I meet all other criteria, am I eligible to apply?

Yes, you are eligible to apply for the STRIDE Mentored Research Scholarship (SMRS) if you are an internationally trained OT with a bachelor's degree and meet other eligibility criteria.

6. Do I have to make a Proposal Central user account to apply?

Yes. Please look for the instructions in [‘AOTF ProposalCentral Instructions - How to Create a User Account’](#).

7. I know a researcher who works in the area I am interested in. Can I request them as my mentor?

Yes. Applicants may suggest a mentor, who meets the eligibility criteria, during the SMRS application process and upload/enter all required mentor information. This information will be reviewed during the application review process.

Awardees, who do not suggest a mentor, will be paired with mentors selected by the AOTF’s STRIDE committee based on the information applicant provides in their SMRS application.

8. What if my mentor is located in a different state?

There are no restrictions based on where mentors/mentees are geographically located.

9. What will be my mentor’s role?

The mentor will guide the selected student /clinician through a research experience over an intensive research experience period. During this period, the mentor will provide instruction, direction, challenge and support to the mentee through weekly individual meetings, weekly lab meetings and/or training to carry out proposed research experience. The Mentor will monitor the mentee’s research activities and provide feedback, offer informal guidance and direction regarding future prospects for research engagement for the applicant, networking possibilities, and regional & national conference opportunities. Additionally, the Mentor will guide the applicant to prepare and present their final poster at the AOTA INSPIRE conference to showcase their work.

10. Who will review the STRIDE Mentored Research Scholarship applications?

Researchers from the AOTF’s STRIDE committee and/or occupational therapy research community will review all applications.

11. Am I required to work with my mentor in-person?

No. The 2026-2027 SMRS research experience may be virtual with the option of supplementing it with visits to the mentor's lab.

12. If awarded, when will I receive the funds associated with the award?

The funds will be released to you after AOTF receives your individualized development plan, assuming we have received all other required documents from you.

13. If I receive the award, when will my research experience begin?

The award period begins on September 1, 2026. Please refer to the 'Award timeline' on the [SMRS webpage](#) for details.

14. How are the STRIDE Research Fund applications reviewed?

Every application is reviewed by experienced researchers from the AOTF's STRIDE committee and/or occupational therapy research community. Reviewers use a scoring rubric to assess the following criteria:

- Clarity of goals: How clearly the applicant describes the research experience they are seeking, why they are pursuing it, and how it aligns with their future work in occupational therapy research.
- Relevant experience of coursework: Examples of prior research related experiences and/or relevant coursework
- Academic benefit: How the proposed research experience and scholarship will support applicant's academic development.
- Personal benefit; How this research experience and scholarship will contribute to the applicant's personal growth.
- Professional benefit: How this research experience and scholarship will enhance the applicant's professional goals in occupational therapy.
- Commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion: A clear description of applicant's lived/personal experience reflecting the principles of diversity, equity, and inclusion as an occupational therapist and/or an occupational therapy student

- Quality of recommendation: The strength and relevance of the applicant's recommendation letter.

15. If awarded, why do I have to submit receipts of all non-stipend expenditures?

AOTF needs the receipts for audit purposes.

16. Is it mandatory to attend the AOTA Inspire conference?

Yes, it is mandatory. AOTF will allow you to budget award funds for conference-related expenses per the award guidelines.

17. Should I submit a final poster if I am not attending the conference in-person?

Yes, you are required to prepare and submit your final poster to AOTF even if you are not attending the conference.