

SSR Grant Mentorship Program

Established March 2026

Background and Rationale

The Society of Skeletal Radiology (SSR) grants program supports innovative, high-quality research across the spectrum of musculoskeletal imaging. While SSR grants are highly competitive and impactful, many awardees - particularly early-career investigators - face challenges related to study design refinement, regulatory processes, timelines, budgeting, data analysis, and manuscript preparation after funding is awarded.

A structured mentorship program has been created to help identify and address potential issues early, improve the likelihood of successful project completion, enhance scholarly output, and strengthen long-term engagement of grantees within SSR. This aligns with SSR's mission to foster research excellence, career development, and academic leadership.

Objectives of the SSR Grant Mentorship Program

1. Provide structured guidance to SSR grantees throughout the grant period.
2. Identify and address scientific, logistical, and administrative challenges early in the research lifecycle.
3. Improve grant outcomes, including timely completion, abstracts, and peer-reviewed publications.
4. Support early-career investigators and promote long-term involvement in SSR research activities.

Program Structure

1. Oversight by SSR Research Committee Chair

- The SSR Research Committee Chair will meet with each funded grantee every 6 months:
 - One remote meeting after 6 months of grant timeline initiation
 - One in-person meeting at the SSR Annual Meeting
- These meetings will focus on:
 - Progress review
 - Identification of barriers
 - Alignment with grant milestones
 - Resource or mentorship needs

2. Individual Mentor Pairing

Participation in the SSR Grant Mentorship Program will be optional. Grant applicants will have the opportunity at the time of application to elect to participate in or opt out of the SSR mentorship pairing. A brief description of the mentorship program, including expectations and structure, will be included within the grant application materials.

Applicants who choose to opt out may include:

- Experienced and accomplished investigators who do not require additional mentorship support
- Investigators (early- or mid-career) who already have established mentorship at their home institution or within their proposed research area

For applicants who elect to participate in the SSR mentorship program, mentor pairing will occur at the time the grant award is announced.

- Each grantee will be paired with a dedicated mentor, selected from:
 - Former SSR grant recipients, and/or
 - Established SSR members with a strong research track record
- Mentor–mentee meetings will occur every 4 months, for a total of four meetings during the grant period:
 - Initial remote meeting at the beginning of the grant
 - Remote meeting at month 4
 - Remote meeting at month 8
 - In-person meeting at the SSR Annual Meeting, when feasible
- Mentors will provide guidance on:
 - Study design and methodology
 - Regulatory and IRB processes
 - Data analysis and interpretation
 - Abstract and manuscript preparation
 - Career development and networking

3. Communication and Accountability

- Following each mentor–mentee meeting, mentors will provide a brief progress update to the SSR Research Committee Chair.
- The Chair will maintain communication with mentors to:
 - Monitor progress
 - Identify recurring challenges across projects

- Facilitate additional support when needed

For grant recipients who opt out of formal SSR mentorship, standard reporting requirements and scheduled Chair check-ins will still apply to ensure appropriate oversight and milestone alignment.

Expected Benefits

- Improved grant execution and completion rates
- Higher quality scientific output and publications
- Early identification of challenges, reducing delays and attrition
- Stronger mentorship culture within SSR
- Enhanced engagement and retention of early-career investigators
- Flexible mentorship participation that respects investigator autonomy while preserving accountability and program integrity.

Conclusion

The SSR Grant Mentorship Program offers a low-cost, high-impact strategy to strengthen the society's research mission. By combining structured oversight with individualized mentorship - while allowing experienced or otherwise well-mentored investigators to opt out when appropriate - this program aims to enhance grant success, promote academic development, and further position SSR as a leader in musculoskeletal imaging research.