Project Awards applicant guidance

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We try to make sure that the information in this guidance is accurate. But changes are possible and the most up-to-date guidance is available on our website.If you have any questions, you can email us at research@mssociety.org.uk or call us on 020 8438 0822.

We're the largest charitable funder of MS research in the UK. We welcome applications for projects that will increase understanding of the cause of MS. And find new effective treatments or prevention strategies. As well as projects improving care and services for people affected by MS too.

We don't make any decisions on the scientific quality and relevance of applications. These are made by independent peer and lay reviewers. As members of the Association of Medical Research Charities we adhere to the Principles of Peer Review.

- Read more about our approach to reviewing applications on our website.
- Read more about The Expert Review Network (TERN) on our website.

You should use this guidance document with the "Help" sections in the application forms on our online application system CC Grant Tracker. There's a list of key terms used throughout this guidance and their definitions in the appendix.

- Log into Grant Tracker.

1. Project Awards purpose and scope

Project Awards provide support for research projects designed to answer a single question or a small group of related questions. Your application must be hypothesis-driven. And it should be clear in the application what your hypothesis and research question(s) are. Such questions must be directed towards our Research Strategy.

These awards have a maximum duration of 36 months and no upper or lower funding limit. While we often receive applications for the maximum duration, we also welcome smaller proposals that don't fit the remit of our other funding rounds.

All funding recommendations come from review panels drawn from The Expert Review Network (TERN), our independent group of experienced researchers, health care professionals and people living with MS.

1.1. Our Research and Organisational Strategies

Your application should fit with our Research Strategy. And you must explain how the project helps us to achieve these aims. We also have an organisational strategy to guide our work. We're in the process of updating our research and organisational strategies for beyond 2024. But in the meantime, we'll consider any applications that are relevant to our current strategies. You should read and strongly consider these documents when writing your application.

- Download our 2023-2024 Research Strategy Extension from our website.
- Read our 2020-2024 Organisational Strategy on our website.

1.2.   Our James Lind Alliance Partnership (JLA) research priorities

In 2013 we completed a James Lind Alliance Partnership (JLA) to identify research priorities that are important to people affected by MS and healthcare professionals.

> Read about our JLA research priorities on our website.

We don't exclusively restrict our funding to these priorities. We continue to support research into the causes of MS, and all aspects of treatment and care for people affected by MS. However, we do favour applications that specifically address these priorities. You will need to outline which, if any, of the JLA priorities your application addresses.

2. Our award conditions and policies

You should also read our Award Conditions and Policies. This document contains our:

- **Open Access Policy:** We're committed to open and unrestricted access to the results of our funded research. We require any research papers based on our funded research to be published in an open access environment.
- **Research Award Conditions:** The Award Conditions, together with the Award Letter and the Policies, set out the terms and conditions on which we make Awards.
- **Intellectual Property Policy:** This Intellectual Property (IP) Policy document sets out principles that we're guided by when considering questions relating to intellectual property and research matters.
- Download our Award Conditions and Policies from our website.
- Read more about how to manage an MS Society Research Award

2.1.   Our position on researcher leave

We strongly believe that researchers should be supported to take periods of leave when they need to. And part-time opportunities should be available for early career researchers to give more people the chance to progress their careers. As part of our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) action plan for MS Society research we're sharing our position on leave for our funded researchers.

We're supportive of our funded researchers taking leave. For example, family leave (maternity, paternity, adoption and shared parental leave) and sick leave. This includes PhD students working on research we fund.

This is our position on researcher leave. It outlines our viewpoint and our expectations, but it's not a policy. Researchers working on our funded projects aren't our employees. So you should check and follow the relevant leave policies at your institution.

- Read more about our position on researcher leave on our website.
- Read more about our work to improve EDI in MS research.

2.2.   Our position on generative AI in research

Generative AI tools such as ChatGPT could bring benefits to MS research. But there are risks associated with their use, particularly in research funding and application review. We

support the Research Funders Policy Group's joint statement on the use of generative AI in funding applications and assessment.

You should note:

- If using generative AI tools in developing your application, you must use them responsibly. And in line with relevant legal and ethical standards where these exist or as they develop.
- You must acknowledge any outputs from generative AI tools in funding applications.

We're committed to maintaining confidentiality in our research funding processes. As this is essential for safeguarding the sharing of scientific opinions and assessments. It's not clear whether anything put into generative AI tools remains confidential. So, our applicants, reviewers and panel members must not put any part of any application under review into these tools. This includes for the purposes of review assessment, applicant responses or other purposes.

- Read the Research Funders Policy Group's joint statement on the use of generative AI in funding applications and assessment.

3. Submitting your application

Your application should be carefully considered and show a high level of grantsmanship. You should thoroughly review it before submission and ask any co-applicants to do the same.

Your application must be submitted through Symplectic Grant Tracker. You must complete all sections of the application form. If sections aren't completed adequately, we'll return your application. Or it might not be validated for review.

- Log into Grant Tracker.
- Download guidance on how to use Grant Tracker from our website.

3.1. Who's eligible to apply?

Our Project Awards are intended for established researchers to apply as Lead Applicant, but junior researchers are also eligible to apply.

You're expected to have a contract (fixed-term or tenure) which covers the proposed duration of the grant. You must be based at an UK university or NHS institution and be the Principal Investigator of the project. Your application must have an applicant with a tenured position at the host institution for the duration of the Award. This doesn't have to be the lead applicant.

The Lead Applicant can invite Co-Applicants and Advisors to join the application as Participants. For all applications the Lead Applicant must invite a Finance Officer who approves the application from the host institution and acts as the Final Signatory for application submission.

3.2. Patient and public involvement in your research

Patient and public involvement (PPI) in research is when people with personal experience of health conditions work in active partnership with researchers. Or research funders like us.

Involvement isn't the same as recruiting participants to your study. Or sharing information with people through public engagement events. Involvement is working **in partnership** with people affected by MS to shape, design and oversee a project.

- Read the NIHR's guide to public involvement in funding applications
- Read the NIHR's 'Briefing notes for researchers - public involvement in NHS, health and social care research'
- Read 'A practical guide to patient and public involvement in lab-based research' online
- Find more resources on NIHR's Learning for Involvement website

In your application you need to describe:

- How people affected by MS have been involved in the development of your proposal (pre-application involvement)
- How you plan to involve people affected by MS in your ongoing study, if funded.

Pre-application involvement

Before applying, you should involve people affected by MS in the development of your proposal. This ensures:

- Your research questions are relevant to their experiences
- Your lay summary is accessible and understandable to our lay reviewers
- Your study design considers the needs of people affected by MS

Involvement in your ongoing study

As well as working with people to develop your application, you should also plan how you'll continue to involve people affected by MS throughout the project. For example, people affected by MS could:

- Join an advisory group to provide their perspective throughout your project. And advise on challenges as they arise
- Review participant information materials such as leaflets, posters, webpages, questionnaires (for clinical projects)
- Advise on the best ways to communicate and disseminate your findings
- Advise on the best approach for recruiting participants
- Work as a peer researcher in your team to be involved throughout the duration of the project (if appropriate)

Budgeting for involvement

Involving people in research requires time and money. It's important to account for the costs of involvement when setting your budget. As without an adequate budget you'll struggle to involve people effectively.

You should include the costs for any planned PPI activities in your application. For example, you should consider:

- Expenses

You must cover any expenses that people will incur by getting involved in PPI activities. People should never be out-of-pocket. This may include, for example, travel, subsistence (including the cost of carers or personal assistance to also attend face-to-face meetings), broadband and childcare costs for online meetings.

- Training and support

Training and induction sessions may be required so that people affected by MS are supported to carry out their role well. There are many free resources available online, but you should consider whether any paid training is required. You may also wish for your PPI contributors to join you at conferences and events.

- Payment

Its best practice to offer payment for members of the public who get involved in your work, in recognition of their time, skills and expertise. How much to budget depends on several factors. For example, how often they are going to be involved and what level of responsibility they will have.

- [Read the INVOLVE guidelines for payment and recognition for public involvement on the NIHR website.](#)

You should read and work through the NIHR's payment guidance for researchers. This includes information on budgeting and example payment rates for different activities.

We can support you to plan and budget for your public involvement, connect you with people affected by MS and to carry out activities. [Get in touch with us by emailing researchnetwork@mssociety.org.uk](#)

3.3. Writing your lay summary and lay summary development scheme

You need to write a clear lay summary for your proposal. People affected by MS will review your application alongside experts in your field. Our funding panels also include researchers without direct expertise in your area of research.

If your lay summary is too brief or too complex, it'll be difficult for them to comment on and score your application. And this will affect whether it might be funded.

We encourage you to use Plain English when writing your lay summary. This will make your writing as accessible as possible to all panel members. You can [read about how we use plain English to be more accessible on our website](#).

- [Read more about Plain English and see some examples on the Plain English Campaign's website.](#)
- [Read our 'Tips for writing a good lay summary'](#)

Our Lay Summary Development scheme

Our optional Lay Summary Development scheme can help you to write a high quality and

accessible lay summary and involvement plan. People affected by MS from our Research Network can give feedback on your draft before you submit.

They can comment on:

- How well you have communicated your research proposal
- The importance of the topic to people affected by MS
- How well you have thought through and communicated your involvement plans

You don't have to complete Lay Summary Development if you don't want to. You can still apply without it. It's not part of our review process but can help you to improve your lay summary.

If you'd like to go through Lay Summary Development, you'll need to submit a completed Lay Summary Development request form. This needs to be submitted before the scheme closes. You'll get feedback on your summary around four weeks before the grant application submission deadline.

- Find more information about the Lay Summary Development scheme, including the guidance notes and request form on our website.
- You can find the Lay Summary Development scheme closing date on our Funding page.

For all enquiries about involving people affected by MS in any stage of your research, you can email our Public Involvement team on researchnetwork@mssociety.org.uk.

3.4. Equality diversity and inclusion in your research

We're committed to equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) in research. We want research findings to be as relevant as possible for everyone with MS in the UK. And to ensure that everyone affected by MS has the opportunity to take part in or engage with MS research. Increasing the diversity of our funded research is one area of focus of our EDI in research action plan.

- Find out more about our EDI in research action plan and progress on our website.

We expect you to consider EDI at all stages of your project. You'll be asked to describe how you've considered EDI in the following areas in your application:

- Public engagement and outreach activities
- Participant recruitment (if applicable)

We've published blogs highlighting the importance of doing more inclusive research. And showcasing examples of how our funded researchers are putting this at the heart of their projects:

- Read our blog: 'Meet the researchers who want seldom-heard groups to be at the centre of their research into fatigue'
- Read our blog: 'Who is MS research missing?'
- Read our blog: 'Improving MS care for people from minoritised ethnic backgrounds'

You can include costs for EDI activities in your application. These activities can be especially important early in your project. But should be considered for the lifecycle of your research.

3.5. NHS excess treatment costs and the SoECAT

Excess Treatment Costs (ETCs) occur when patient care or treatment costs in a research study are higher than in routine care. For example, a research participant is given a new drug to see how it compares with the standard drug prescribed. If the new drug is more expensive than the one usually prescribed then it is an 'excess treatment cost'. For non-commercial research studies (those not funded by pharmaceutical companies for commercial ends), ETCs are paid by the NHS.

Since 2018, researchers across the UK have used the Schedule of Events Cost Attribution Tool (SoECAT) to estimate ETCs. The SoECAT makes sure that site-level costs are appropriately assigned in line with AcoRD principles. Doing this when applying for funding means that site-level Research Costs can be met through that funding.

You need to complete the SoECAT online. The NIHR have released guidance for using the new online tool, which we've outlined below. You should read their guidance in full. You must get your SoECAT signed off by an AcoRD specialist for HRA approval and NIHR portfolio status.

- [Log into the NIHR Central Portfolio Management System (CPMS) to complete an online SoECAT](#)
- [Read guidance for creating and logging into CPMS on the NIHR website](#).
- [Find further information on the Online SoECAT Guidance page on the NIHR website](#).

Applying to us

If you're applying for funding from us to carry out clinical research in the NHS, you'll need a SoECAT. You'll need to factor in the time to complete it and have an AcoRD Specialist sign it **before the deadline**. You must upload the Funder Export from your approved online SoECAT to your application form.

Our research awards don't include NHS support and/or treatment costs. NHS support costs are funded through Clinical Research Networks. NHS treatment costs, including any ETCs and/or savings, are funded by the NHS through normal patient care commissioning arrangements. You shouldn't include these costs in your application's budget.

3.6. Finances and costs

You should work with finance offices, clinical trials units, local NHS trusts and the local NIHR CRN network to ensure that all costs of research have been identified and appropriately paid for. The sections below outline our list of acceptable and unacceptable costs. You should read it carefully, including the notes column. You can request the costs guidance table in an alternative format by emailing research@mssociety.org.uk.

Please note:

- All requested budget items must be fully justified in your application.
- We may reduce or remove ineligible costs.
- If you believe that any of the 'unacceptable costs' should be seen as direct costs for your project, you must provide full and detailed justification for this in your application.
- We won't be responsible for any increase in the costs of research (whether caused by increased consumables costs, increased personnel costs or otherwise). We won't increase the award to reflect increased research costs, including increased salaries due to nationally agreed pay awards or inflation, once the award has been made.

3.6.1. Staff members

Acceptable costs	Unacceptable costs	Notes
• Salaries for staff who work specifically on the funded project, employed at the host institution. • Staff may include research, technical or other roles, such as a project manager. • Staff time at other institutions for specific project work packages, such as specialist statistical analysis. This should be included as a non-salary "Consultant" cost in Consumables.	• Apprenticeship levy isn't covered. • Salary for the applicant team isn't permitted. This includes co-applicants and advisers.	• There are some circumstances where we'd consider a **proportion of salary for one member** of the applicant team. Their salary for research must be reliant on grant funding. And the request must be strongly justified for the benefit of MS research. Their institution must confirm their salary circumstances before we make an award. You should provide a copy of current salary scales in the 'Attachments' section for all salaried staff. • You must quote an appropriate grading and salary, approved by the administrative office of the host institution. We need this even where staff members can't be named. • The employing institution is responsible for providing maternity benefit and increases in salary costs

		other than annual increments and cost of living awards.

3.6.2. Consumables

Acceptable costs	Unacceptable costs	Notes
• Laboratory chemicals and materials (e.g. reagents, isotopes, peptides, enzymes, antibodies, gases, proteins, cell/tissue/ bacterial culture). • Data collection materials, if specific to the project. • Patient and public involvement (PPI) costs, including travel for PPI representatives. • Equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) activity costs • Consultant costs, such as statisticians. • Travel for non-conference/meeting related research for named staff members on the award if essential to the project. • Data sharing costs, such as archiving repository fees, data storage costs and data management services.	• Article publishing or open access charges. • Standard per unit IT charges. • First class travel or accommodation	• A full justification is required for all consumables. • You can read more guidance on PPI and EDI costs on the NIHR INVOLVE website. • Data management and sharing costs must be reasonable and proportional in the context of the overall grant. Data sharing costs **don't** include open access publication costs.

3.6.3. Equipment

Acceptable costs	Unacceptable costs	Notes
• Equipment that's specific to **this** grant and essential to carry out the proposed research • Costs may include purchase, delivery and installation of scientific equipment where that equipment is specific to the grant. • Personal computing costs for named staff members working specifically on the	• Equipment can't be requested for routine or service use. • Annual software licencing fees aren't eligible for inclusion. • Phone/computer accessories (drivers, cases, chargers, batteries).	• Personal computing equipment costs are capped at £1,500. • Each piece of equipment, including computing equipment, must be fully justified. • The host institution is responsible for equipment. This includes its accommodation, operating and servicing costs, and

award. Funding for computer equipment or software is only allowed if absolutely essential for the project. And must be fully justified in your application.		any insurance that may be necessary. • Equipment access costs: You can't include Directly Allocated costs. You can include fees relating to the use of core equipment, services or research facilities that are essential to the project. You must state the cost per sample/time period for these.

3.6.4. Animals

Acceptable costs	Unacceptable costs	Notes
• Animal purchase and transportation costs, maintenance (including food) and experimentation costs.	• Home Office Licences and animal handling training costs aren't covered.	• You must state the species and number of animals to be used. • You must fully justify the use of animals in the Project Details of your application. You can read more in the 'Use of animals' section of this document.

3.6.5. Human tissue

Acceptable costs	Unacceptable costs	Notes
• Cost for the provision of human tissue.		• If you're planning to use human tissue from the MS Society Tissue Bank, you should estimate the costs based on the tariff found on their website. • You can read more in the 'Use of human tissue' section of this document.

3.6.6. Conferences

Acceptable costs	Unacceptable costs	Notes
• A maximum of £1,000 can be requested for each year for each member of salaried staff on the project. • This can be used to cover travel, registration fees and/or accommodation for meetings/conferences.	• First class travel or accommodation • Conference costs for the lead applicant, co-applicants and advisers aren't eligible for inclusion	• Conferences costs are pro rata. For example, if a salaried member of staff is 50% Full Time Equivalent, they can claim up to £500 of fees in one year. • Conference costs can be moved between grant years if the maximum acceptable amount isn't exceeded. • Meetings/conferences must be directly related to the funded research.

3.6.7. Other

Unacceptable costs	Notes
• Excess treatment costs • Institutional overheads • Financial services • Personnel services • Recruitment costs • Public relations • General institution libraries • Departmental services (administration, secretarial, printing, photocopying) • Telephone charges and postage or courier services • Journal subscriptions • Furniture	The NHS should fund excess treatment costs (ETCs). If you're applying for a clinical research grant, you'll need to complete a Schedule of Events Cost Attribution Template (SoECAT). This will allow your grant to be eligible for the NIHR portfolio and the support this provides, including ETCs.

Types of costs

Your institution's finance team should be able to provide further guidance on costings. If you are unsure please get in touch with us. Including ineligible costs may delay application submission or approval of award.

We won't fund the full economic costs of research (fECs), or a fixed proportion of these. We'll only pay for the Directly Incurred costs related specifically to the planned research to be

undertaken in this grant. As a member of the AMRC we support their position statement on supporting research in universities outlining what charities pay for and why.

- Read the position statement on charities supporting research in universities on the AMRC website.

Directly incurred	Directly allocated	Indirect
These include the familiar direct costs of research such as: • Staff (e.g. research assistant salaries) • Travel and subsistence • Consumables and Equipment (or specific access to equipment) We'll pay these costs, but you'll need to justify why they're needed for the research.	These are shared costs, based on estimates and don't represent actual costs on a project-by-project basis. As such we will not pay these costs. They were previously included as 'indirect costs' heading. They include: • The costing of the time spent by the applicant and co-applicants • Estates: the way these are calculated may vary between institutions. Different categories of space will be costed differently, for example laboratory space will be different to office-based costs. • Other Directly Allocated: these include the costs of shared resources, such as staff and equipment.	These costs are necessary for underpinning research but can't be allocated to individual projects. These include things like computing and information support, central services, general maintenance and other infrastructure costs. They'll be calculated separately by each Higher Education Institution (HEI), according to TRAC methodology. We won't cover Indirect Costs or any other non-attributable overhead costs in your budget. However, such costs may be eligible under the Charity Research Support Fund.

3.7. Co-funding applications

We're open to co-funding applications with other funders. You should provide full details of the co-funder and amount they would be contributing.

3.8. Use of animals

If your research project uses animals, you must complete the Justification for Animal Use section of the application form.

- You should review our policy on animal research on our website.
- Read the AMRC's statement on animal research on their website. We fully support this statement.

We won't support the use of animals in research unless there's no alternative. And our reviewers carefully consider animal use procedures. We'll only support research using animals if:

- All animal use falls within the regulations laid down by Government, including the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986 and the Animal Welfare Act 2006.
- All relevant Home Office licences and Ethical Review Body approvals are held for the duration of the intended projects. You and your institution are responsible for these being in place. We may ask to see copies of licences and approvals before activating your award.
- Any research conducted outside of the UK using animals should be conducted to the spirit of UK animal research legislation and to the UK welfare standards. Read more about these expectations on page 14 of the NC3Rs 'Responsibility in the Use of Animals in Research' guidance document. You're responsible for making sure any international collaborators are following these standards. But we may request additional review by NC3Rs if we have concerns.

The 3Rs of animal research

You must address the 3Rs in the Project Details section of the application. You're required to explain how you've considered each of the following:

- Reducing the number of animals used to the minimum necessary for a valid result
- Refining experiments to minimise any pain, suffering or distress
- Replacing animal experiments with alternatives wherever possible.
- Explore the NC3Rs library of resources for implementing the 3Rs in your research.
- Read the NC3Rs 'Responsibility in the use of animals in bioscience research' guidance on their website

Justifications

You must clearly state and justify the following in your application:

- The relevance to humans and why there is no alternative to the use of animals
- The species and number of any animals that could potentially be used
- Any refinement procedures to minimise any pain or distress
- Measures taken to avoid bias (e.g. blinding, randomisation)
- Number of experimental and control groups and sample size per group
- How the sample size was calculated, showing power calculations and including justification of effect size
- Overview of the planned statistical analyses in relation to the primary outcomes to be assessed
- Frequency of measurements/interventions to be used
- If necessary, circumstances in which power calculations aren't appropriate to determine sample size

If these aren't addressed, we'll return your application.

Considerations

You should also consider that we support the AMRC's signing of the Concordat on Openness in Animal Research. This encourages grant holders to be open about their use of animals in research.

- Read the Concordat on Openness in Animal Research on the Understanding Animal Research website.

The ARRIVE (Animal Research: Reporting In Vivo Experiments) guidelines have been developed by the NC3Rs to improve how *in vivo* studies are reported. They ensure that data from animal experiments can be fully evaluated and used by other researchers. We fully endorse these guidelines. We expect our researchers to comply with them designing your experiments and reporting your research.

- Read the ARRIVE guidelines 2.0 on the ARRIVE website.

For further help in planning your experiments you should consider use of the PREPARE Guidelines (Planning Research and Experimental Procedures on Animals: Recommendations for Excellence). These guidelines include checklists which can help with improving reproducibility, reducing waste and promoting alternatives in animal research through better planning and communication.

- Read the PREPARE guidelines on the Norecopa website.

3.9. Use of human tissue

Donated human tissue is a vital and precious resource, therefore you must justify why human tissue will be used in your research. If your research uses human tissue, you must confirm that you'll comply with the appropriate legislation. And follow the relevant Codes of Practice issued by the Human Tissue Authority (HTA). The type of tissue and quantity must be fully justified in your application.

3.10. Use of the UK MS Register

If you plan to use the UK MS Register in your project, you must contact the Register team as early as possible. All projects that will use the MS Register must be reviewed and approved by the UK MS Register's Scientific Steering Committee (SSC).

You're responsible for obtaining SSC approval **before** you submit your application to us. Confirmation of SSC approval must be attached to your application. This allows us to verify that your project is feasible and can be supported by the Register. Getting SSC approval can take time, so make sure you factor this in when working towards our application submission deadline. You can find out more about the SSC approval process, and SSC meeting dates and deadlines, on the MS Register website.

- Read more about using the MS Register in your research on our website.
- Learn more about the SSC approvals process, including meeting dates and deadlines, on the MS Register website.

3.11. References

You should cite all essential references relevant to your proposal. We don't specify a referencing style. But you must include enough information in the reference list for reviewers to find the publication. DOIs alone aren't sufficient.

Copies of in-press or submitted publications relevant to the proposal should also be included. You can add these in the "Attachments" section.

4. Criteria for review

Your application will be scored on the quality of science and relevance to MS. Applications will be reviewed and scored by both external peer and lay reviewers. And by The Expert Review Network (TERN) in our review panel meetings. Our panels are made up of TERN members with different expertise. Not everyone on the panel is an expert in your field. So, it's important to consider this when writing your application. We recommend writing in Plain English throughout your application as this improves accessibility. And means that all panel members can fully engage with and understand your proposal.

- Read more about TERN on our website.

You can also suggest up to three potential peer reviewers for your application in the "Project Details" section of the online application form. And tell us any reviewers you don't want to review your application, with justification.

- Once you've submitted your application, we validate it to make sure it fits the Project Awards remit. And to check that all sections of the form have been completed adequately.
- If your application is eligible, we send it for independent, external review by members of the research community with relevant expertise and members of our Research Network.
- Based on the external review scores, applications go through a shortlisting process:
  - This involves the TERN Review Panel Chair discussing the review scores and comments. It can also include a Vice Chair and a lay panel member, depending on the applications being considered.
  - They'll recommend a shortlist of the highest quality and most relevant applications for further review. These will have the best chances of being fundable in this round.
  - The remaining applications will be rejected (triaged)
  - We'll tell all applicants the triage outcomes around a month before funding outcomes are announced.
- If your application is shortlisted, you're invited to provide a rebuttal to the reviewers' comments. You'll have 14 days to submit this and we'll advise you of the rebuttal dates in advance.
- Shortlisted applications are considered by invited TERN members at the Project Awards TERN Review Panel meeting.
- The TERN Review Panel provides a recommendation to us about which applications should be funded.
- Our Board of Trustees then considers their recommendations for funding.
- Following approval by the Board, we'll communicate official funding offers, awards are made and projects start.

The scoring guidance used by our reviewers is found on the next page. You can request the scoring guidance for reviewers table in an alternative format by emailing research@mssociety.org.uk.

Project Award scoring guidance for reviewers

All reviewers are asked to score applications between 1 and 5, corresponding to ratings of highly fundable, potentially fundable and not fundable. We've outlined the criteria used to score applications and their ratings below.

Rating	Generic criteria	Project Award specific
Highly fundable (scores above 3.5)	- Research question(s) are likely to result in significant benefit for people affected by MS. And/or advancement in our scientific understanding of MS - Research team is very strong, containing all relevant disciplines to deliver project outcomes - Very good value for money - Proposal is clear and well written - People affected by MS are actively involved and influencing project at all relevant stages (PPI) - Proposal has a clear and realistic pathway to impact. Potential impact is highly significant and appropriate to grant type. - Research design is excellent, appropriate and highly feasible for the Award type.	- Research design is excellent and highly appropriate for a Project Award. - The proposed study design, methods and analyses are appropriate to the project aims. They are adequately developed and justified. All aspects of the proposed study design are well-coordinated.
Potentially fundable (scores between 2.5 and 3.5)	- Research question(s) are likely to result in benefit for people affected by MS. Or some advancement in the scientific understanding of MS - Research team has relevant experience and contains most of the relevant disciplines to deliver project outcomes - Acceptable value for money - Some elements of involving people affected by MS, where appropriate, but not well integrated or well supported - Elements of the application are unclear - Project would only be fundable with some changes - Proposal has a reasonable pathway to impact. Potential impact is significant and mostly appropriate to grant type. - Research design is acceptable for the Award type	- Acceptable research design for a Project Award - Proposed study design, methods and analyses are acceptable but they are only partially coordinated. - Further explanation for how design fits with the aims of the project is required.

Not fundable (scores below 2.5)	• Research question(s) are irrelevant with no tangible benefit to people affected by MS. • Key skills missing from the research team • Poor value for money • Unclear application • Involvement of people affected by MS inappropriate or limited/ lacking • Pathway to impact is unclear and/or unrealistic. Little or no potential impact or poorly described/not appropriate to grant type. • Research design is unsuitable for the Award type.	• Research design is unsuitable for a Project Award. • There are serious scientific concerns about the proposed research, for example: it's poor, flawed and/or duplicative. • Research design, methods and analyses aren't well developed or integrated • Further explanation is needed for how design fits with the aims of the project.

5. Resubmission policy

Unless you're explicitly invited, we only allow one resubmission of any previously unsuccessful application. If you are resubmitting an application, you should indicate this in the 'Other Support' section of the application form. And complete the text box according to the guidance.

Why do we only allow one resubmission?

Over the past five years, less than 10% of resubmissions have been successful.

Our resubmission policy aims to promote a culture of high-quality submissions and high-quality reviews that will benefit you, our reviewers and us alike. And the MS community by helping us select and fund high quality and relevant research that has an impact on people affected by MS.

What do we consider as a resubmission?

A resubmission is any application that was previously submitted to our Grant Rounds. This includes if you submit the same application under a different name. Or if you submit the same application under a different funding stream (e.g. changing a PhD Fellowship to a Catalyst Award).

Exceptions to our resubmission rule

We may invite a small number of further resubmissions if there is compelling evidence from peer review. And if advised by the TERN Review Panels.

Preparing a resubmission

If you're preparing a resubmission, you must:

- Indicate this in the 'Other Support' section of the application form.
- Make sure that previous comments or considerations have been adequately responded to. This includes written review comments and/or panel feedback. Reviewers will have access to your previous application and review comments.
- Include a summary of any substantial changes to the application

If you don't include these, your application won't be eligible for re-review. And we'll automatically reject it.

What constitutes sufficient change to qualify as a new submission?

We'll only qualify applications as a new submission if they contain major changes. It's not sufficient to include only minor changes or considering reviewer comments as a new submission.

Consequences of an Uninvited Resubmission:

If we feel that a new application is a resubmission, or if you submit an uninvited resubmission that has already been submitted twice, then we'll automatically reject it.

6. Contact us

Please let us know if you have any questions or need help. You can email us at research@mssociety.org.uk or call us on 020 8438 0822.

Thank you for your interest in our research funding.

7. Appendix: key terms and definitions

Term	Definition
Lead applicant	The named lead applicant is the project leader. As lead applicant, you: • Are the contact person for all correspondence relating to the application. • Have overall responsibility for the award and must actively engage in its direction.
Adviser	Advisers don't need to be actively involved in the delivery of project. But you must define their contribution (expertise, advice etc.) to the project team. • They can view and edit the application, and provide comments. • Advisers' CVs are included in the application PDF and seen by reviewers. • They need to confirm their participation. But don't need to approve the application. • You can't request salary costs for advisers.
Co-applicant	A co-applicant is a researcher who'll be actively involved in the delivery of the project should the funding application be successful. You can't include them simply for supervisory purposes. • Co-applicants can view and edit applications. • Co-applicants have to approve applications before they can be submitted.
Finance officer	This is a member of your institution who's responsible for confirming and approving financial details of applications. • They act as **final signatory** for application submission. Your application won't be accepted if it's not approved by the Finance Officer before the funding deadline. • They'll be responsible for administering the grant if it is awarded.
Public engagement	Where information and knowledge about research is provided and disseminated. Examples of engagement are: • science festivals open to the public • open days at a research centre • raising awareness in the media Read more about public engagement on the National Centre for Co-ordinating Public Engagement's website.
Public involvement (PPI)	**Public involvement (PPI)** Where members of the public are actively involved in research projects and in research organisations. Examples of involvement include when people affected by MS:

	- are involved in identifying research priorities - are members of a project steering group - comment on patient information materials Read more about involvement on the NIHR website.
Public participation	Where people take part in a research study. Examples of participation include: - people being recruited to a clinical trial or other study - people completing a questionnaire as part of a study. Read more about participation in trials on the NHS website.
Research Network	The Research Network are a passionate group of people living with MS or caring for someone with MS. They're not required to have specialist scientific knowledge, but are trained to use their personal experiences of MS to review applications, ensuring that the research we fund is of the highest importance to people affected by MS.

We're the MS Society.
Our community is here for you through the highs, lows and everything in between. We understand what life's like with MS.

Together, we are strong enough to stop MS.
mssociety.org.uk

Contact us
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