Lay summary development

Guidance for Research Network members

2024-2025

Lay Summary Development

Patient and Public Involvement (PPI) is a vital component of our research strategy and funding programme. We support MS researchers with developing and achieving their PPI activities, throughout their research project. Our 'lay summary development' scheme is one way we offer PPI support to researchers.

Why are lay summaries important?

We ask all researchers to write a lay summary and a public involvement plan as part of their funding application. They must explain their research project plan in plain English.

All our research funding decisions are guided by the expertise of MS researchers and people affected by MS. Members of our Research Network ensure we fund high quality projects that are relevant and accessible to the MS community. That's why lay summary and public involvement plans are an essential part of all our research award applications. So people affected by MS can meaningfully contribute to the awarding decisions.

Why provide feedback on draft lay summaries?

If a researcher submits a poor lay summary, or poorly considered public involvement plan, it'll negatively impact their funding application.

Some researchers find it challenging to write high quality and accessible lay summaries. We want to help them improve, and that's where you come in. As a Research Network member, you'll use your lived experience of MS to provide feedback on draft lay summaries and public involvement plans. Researchers can then incorporate your suggestions to improve their funding application before submission.

By providing honest and constructive feedback to these draft lay summaries, you are helping to ensure that the research we fund is of the highest quality, relevant and accessible to people affected by MS.

What research do we fund?

We fund research to help improve diagnosis, treatments and services for people affected by MS. From myelin repair to diet and exercise, and everything in between.

We offer funding to MS researchers at every stage of their career, from PhD students through to professors. Most of the research we fund is through our different award types (see table below). We accept applications for these at specific times of the year.

Type	Remit	Length	Amount
Catalyst Award	Small-scale pilot or proof-of-concept projects exploring new ideas.	Up to 1 year	Up to £50,000
Project Award	Projects designed to answer a single research question, or a small group of related questions.	Up to 3 years	No upper limit. Researchers tend to request £150,000 - £300,000
PhD Fellowship	Graduates embarking on a research career in MS. The PhD student is supervised by an experienced researcher.	3 years	Typically around £100,000
Early Career Fellowship	Talented scientists who are in the early stages of their careers (after a PhD). Early Career Fellows are supervised by an experienced researcher.	Up to 4 years	Up to £250,000
Data Discovery Award	For projects seeking to use data from the MS Register as part of their research.	Up to 1 year	Up to £50,000
Skills Development Award	For Early Career Researchers (ECR) to undertake specialist training courses for their professional development.	Up to 1 year	Up to £2,000

How do I get involved in the Lay Summary Development scheme?

We'll advertise the opportunity via our monthly Research Network email. You can then sign up and let us know how many lay summaries you have time to read. We'll email a number of these to you after the sign-up deadline. You'll then have approximately one month to provide your written feedback. See below for guidance on how to provide your feedback.

Please get in touch if you have any accessibility requirements so we can better support you:
Email: ResearchNetwork@mssociety.org.uk
Phone: 020 8438 0700

How to share your feedback

Researchers will submit their draft lay summary and public involvement plan on our designated Lay Summary Development form. This form is split into five sections for you to read and feedback on their research proposal (see below).

When providing feedback please try to:

- Fully explain your answers and reasoning. This can be in bullet points or full sentences, which ever you find easiest to make your point.
- Refer to specific examples in the text to back up your point. For example, which words or sentences didn't make sense.
- Provide suggestions on how things could be improved, if you think of anything
- Be respectful and constructive, understanding that this is not a finished version. The applicant has asked for our support to make their application the best it can be.

You'll need **1-2 hours** to read and provide feedback on each lay summary. This depends on the length and complexity of the lay summary.

Section 1

This first section provides some administrative information for us and will provide you with some context about the research project. Please do feedback on the 'Lay project title' as this can often be tricky for researchers to get right.

1. Application details

Lead applicant's name:

Institution:

Lay project title:

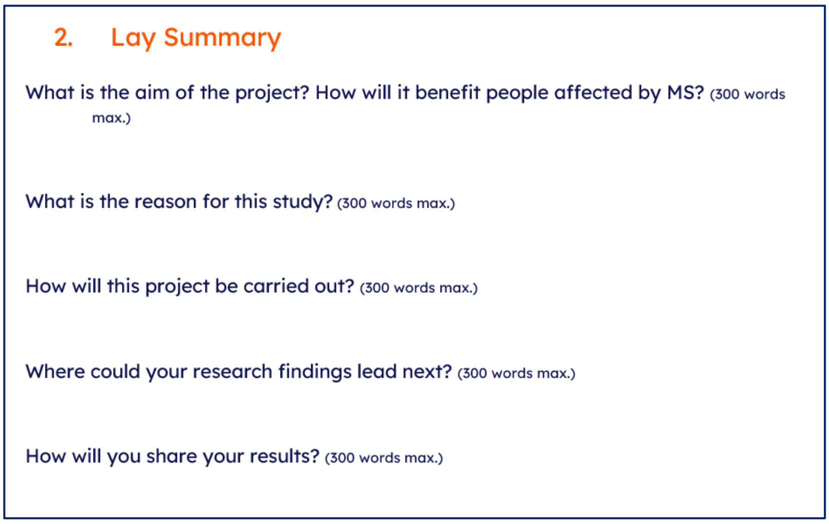
Does this project involve animals? Yes / No

Which funding award are you applying for?

Section 2

Researchers will answer the same five Lay Summary questions. We suggest you read their answers at least once before providing feedback.

You'll be asked to share your feedback in section 5. But you may wish to also leave some feedback, as tracked changes or in review comments, directly in this section 2.



2. Lay Summary

What is the aim of the project? How will it benefit people affected by MS? (300 words max.)

What is the reason for this study? (300 words max.)

How will this project be carried out? (300 words max.)

Where could your research findings lead next? (300 words max.)

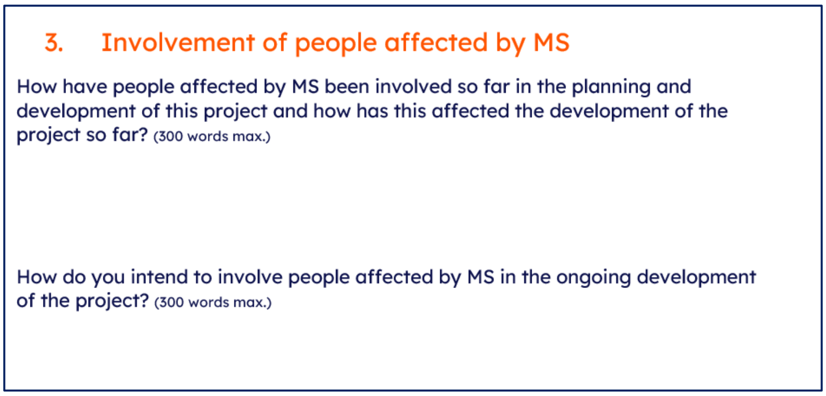
How will you share your results? (300 words max.)

Section 3

Researchers will answer two questions about their involvement plans.
This section is about public **involvement** in research, not **participation.**

- **Involvement** is when researchers work in partnership with people affected by MS to plan, design and carry out research. For example, people affected by MS might influence the design of a project, offer their advice as members of a steering group, or help to develop information materials for participants in the project.
- **Participation** is when people are recruited to take part as subjects in a study. For example by taking a new drug in a clinical trial, completing a survey or giving a blood sample.

You'll be asked to share your feedback in section 5. But you may wish to also leave some feedback, as tracked changes or in review comments, directly in this section 3.



3. Involvement of people affected by MS

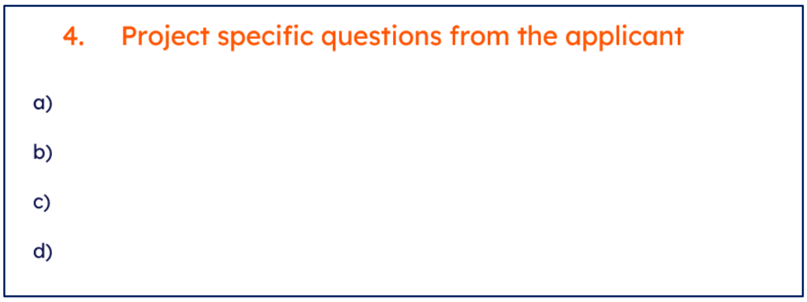
How have people affected by MS been involved so far in the planning and development of this project and how has this affected the development of the project so far? (300 words max.)

How do you intend to involve people affected by MS in the ongoing development of the project? (300 words max.)

Section 4

Researchers can ask you some specific questions related to their research project. There is no limit on the number of questions they can ask.

Please write you answer directly under each question asked.



4. Project specific questions from the applicant

a)

b)

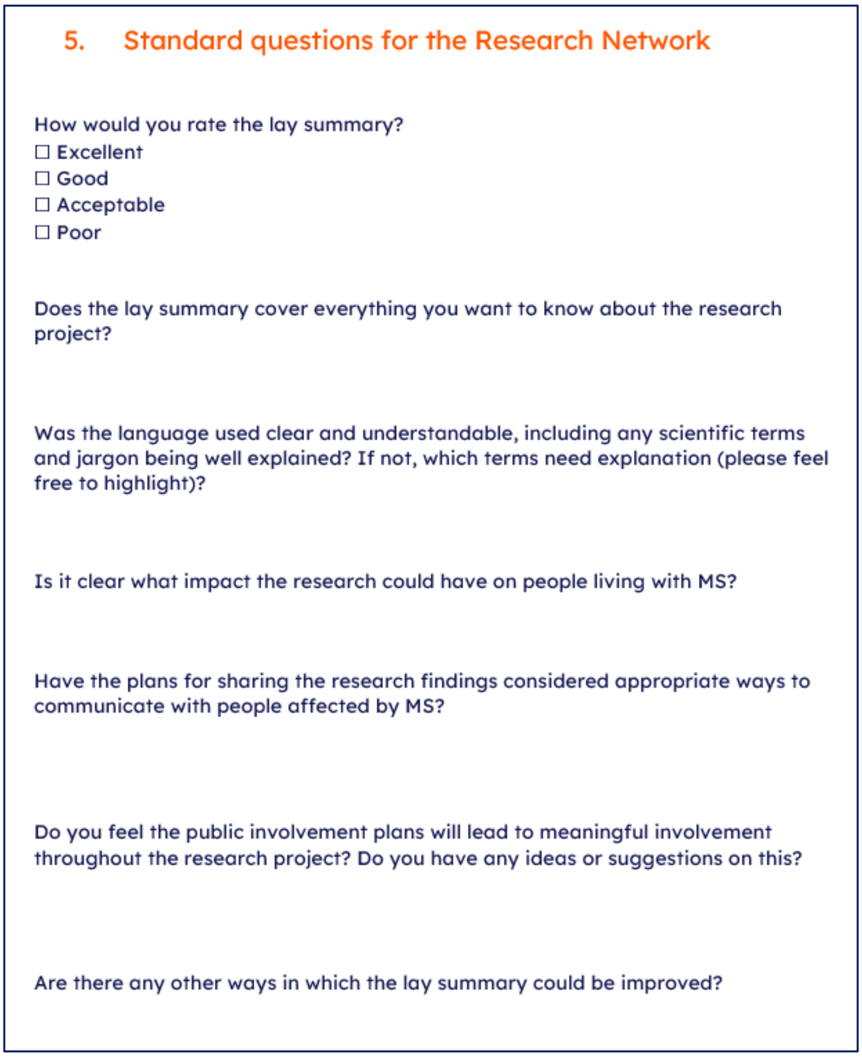
c)

d)

Section 5

These seven questions are for you to answer, based on all the information you have read in sections 2 and 3. This is to ensure the researcher receives feedback on the key topics that will help them improve their application.

Please try to be as detailed as possible and fully explain your answers. Don’t just answer yes or no, try to support this with a reason. If you can provide suggestions on how the researcher could improve, they really appreciate this.



5. Standard questions for the Research Network

How would you rate the lay summary?
☐ Excellent
☐ Good
☐ Acceptable
☐ Poor

Does the lay summary cover everything you want to know about the research project?

Was the language used clear and understandable, including any scientific terms and jargon being well explained? If not, which terms need explanation (please feel free to highlight)?

Is it clear what impact the research could have on people living with MS?

Have the plans for sharing the research findings considered appropriate ways to communicate with people affected by MS?

Do you feel the public involvement plans will lead to meaningful involvement throughout the research project? Do you have any ideas or suggestions on this?

Are there any other ways in which the lay summary could be improved?

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

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