



Tips for writing a great MS Society Research grant application

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MS Society research funding is highly competitive, with a success rate of around 20-25% over the past 5 years. Winning applications demonstrate high scientific quality and must be very relevant to people affected by MS in the UK. You can improve your chances of success by using the tips below, which we've compiled from the most frequently cited concerns of our grant review panels (GRPs). You can use this guide to help you submit the strongest possible application to the MS Society Grant Round.

Give us more justification and details of your chosen methods (and statistical approach)

The most common reason for why applications are rejected are due to a lack of detail or justification in the chosen method(s) or statistical analys(es). You should explain and justify every method, sample size (including power calculations unless justified) and analysis technique you use. These details will help the panel to understand how scientifically sound, feasible and value-for-money your proposal is.

Show us the proposal is well-designed

The second most common reason for rejection is due to design flaw(s). We consult with international experts in the field (peer reviewers) to scrutinise the scientific details of a proposal.

The concerns they flag up can vary depending on the nature of the application but may include issues with the techniques involved, area of focus (e.g cells or participant group), sample size, follow-up period or concerns regarding bias.

We encourage you to make use of the free [NIHR Research Design Service](#) which provides design and methodological review services that will improve your application.

Do a spell and sense check before submission

Too many applications have poor spelling, grammar or inconsistent details (for example, mismatch between the Gantt chart and application form) which can make an application difficult to understand. An application submission should be a team effort so ensure that all applicants have thoroughly reviewed the proposal for spelling and logical flow before submission.

Involve people affected by MS in your proposal design

Involving people affected by MS (PaMS) forms an essential part of [our research strategy](#) and application review process. Involving PaMS help to ensure the research we fund is of high quality and relevance to their needs.

Usually 25% of an application's score is from our lay reviewers, so it is very important for your lay reviewers to understand your application. Some of the key areas they consider include the strength of public-patient involvement (PPI) of an application and the clarity of the lay summary.

Absent or weak PPI, and unclear lay summaries is common feedback from our reviewers. PaMS should be involved in all parts of your research, from the planning of the research project to the dissemination. We can help you with this – more below.

Remember that PPI members are often volunteers, some of whom may have never been involved in research before. Ensure that adequate support is in place and they will not be overburdened (these principles also apply to patient participants in your proposal).

Appendix 1 of our Applicant guidance offers helpful tips on writing lay summaries. We're here to help; the MS Society hosts a [Research Network](#), formed of PaMS, who are able to help review your application as well as your lay summary. This is called **Application development** process. We also hold **PPI training courses** which you may find helpful to attend. Be mindful that there is a deadline for signing up to this course as well as Application development.

Demonstrate the relevance and potential impact of your application

While we also consider applications outside of these areas, our panel members look favourably on applications which align with the priorities set by [people affected by MS](#) and [our research strategy](#). Your proposal should aim to address a demonstrable gap in MS research.

Novelty and innovation is important, but reviewers also look for applications that have an appropriate balance between ambition and feasibility. Having a clear and realistic pathway to impact will help your application score highly. Applications which are focused and achievable within the time frame and budget proposed are the most sought-after by reviewers. For PhD Studentships in particular, ensure that sufficient time has been considered for a PhD student to learn a broad range of skills.

Get the right team together

The applicant(s) should have expertise in MS and other expertise relevant to the grant (for example, statistical or digital skills), as well as experience in managing grants. Don't assume that the panel will know your area of expertise, and make it clear what each team member will be doing.

For PhD Studentship applications, the supervisory experience will be particularly scrutinised. For Junior Fellowships, additional competencies of the lead applicant such as presentation skills will be considered.

Justify any ethical or legal concerns

In your proposal, it is important to consider the impact of your study on participants or animals (if you are doing an animal study). You should think about any particular risks that your subjects may face, and how you will safeguard against this. This is especially important if you plan to work with particularly vulnerable groups such as children or those at the end of their life. You should also consider the laws around data protection.

Other

- *Incorporating comments for resubmissions* - Panel members have access to your first submission and any associated feedback. Make sure previous concerns have been resolved or justify why they have not.
- *Further justification for costs needed* – all the costs you claim for in your application will be carefully scrutinised to ensure they are necessary for you to complete the research and that they comply with our Applicant Guidance (in particular, see Section 10 Finance and Costs of the Guidance).

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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 **Let's stop MS together**