

The main title of the document, "MS Society Project Awards Applicant guidance", is centered within a large, stylized orange shape that resembles a play button or a large arrow pointing to the right. The shape has a gradient from light orange to dark orange and is outlined in a thin orange line. The text is in a bold, white, sans-serif font.

You should use this guidance document with the 'help' sections on our online application system CC Grant Tracker.

October 2023

Let's stop MS together

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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](mailto:research@mssociety.org.uk) or call us on 020 8438 0822.

1. Introduction

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.

- > [Log into Grant Tracker.](#)

2. 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. Such questions must be directed towards our Research Strategy. Applications should be hypothesis driven.

These awards have a maximum duration of 36 months and no upper or lower funding limit.

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.

2.1 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 from 2020-2024. 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.](#)

2.2 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.

3. 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.
- **Grant 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](#)

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.](#)

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.](#)

4. Key Terms and Definitions

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 project.
- 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.

Co-applicant

- A co-applicant is a researcher who'll be actively involved in the project should the funding application be successful.
- Co-applicants can view and edit applications.
- Co-applicants have to approve applications before they can be submitted.

Finance officer

- 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)

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.

5. 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 CC 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.](#)

5.1 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.

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.

5.2 Patient and public involvement (PPI) 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 about 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 on their website.](#)
- > [Read 'A practical guide to patient and public involvement in lab-based research' online.](#)

In your application you need to describe:

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

Pre-application involvement

Before applying, we encourage you to involve people affected by MS in the development of your proposal. This helps to ensure:

- your research questions are relevant to their experiences
- you can demonstrate the relevance of your work to people affected by MS
- 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 for how you will 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 the course of a project - advising 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

Budgeting for involvement

Involving people in research requires time and money. It's important to account for the costs of involvement as without them, 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:

a. 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 and carer costs for face-to-face meetings, broadband and childcare costs for online meetings.

b. 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 Research Network members to join you at conferences and events.

c. Payment

It is 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 will depend on a number of 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.](#)

We recommend you 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 with people affected by MS and carry out activities. [Get in touch with us by emailing researchnetwork@mssociety.org.uk](mailto:researchnetwork@mssociety.org.uk).

5.3 Writing your lay summary and Lay Summary Development

Writing your lay summary

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.

- > [Read more about Plain English and see some examples on the Plain English Campaign's website.](#)

Our Lay Summary Development scheme

Our optional Lay Summary Development scheme can help you. People affected by MS from our Research Network can give feedback on your lay summary 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.

You don't have to complete Lay Summary Development if you don't want to. And can still submit an application 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 closing date, guidance notes and request form on our website.](#)

You can also find 'Tips for writing a good lay summary' to download from the sidebar of this 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](mailto:researchnetwork@mssociety.org.uk).

5.4 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.

From 1 April 2023, you'll 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.

> [Log into the NIHR Central Portfolio Management System \(CPMS\) to complete an online SoECAT](#)

To create a SoECAT, you'll need to create a CPMS account and log in to activate it. [You can read guidance for creating and logging into CPMS on the NIHR website](#). You'll find guidance for completing the SoECAT in the online tool. [You can find further information on the Online SoECAT Guidance page on the NIHR website](#). You must get your SoECAT signed off by an AcoRD specialist for HRA approval and NIHR portfolio status.

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.

5.5 Finance 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.

This table includes 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.](mailto:research@mssociety.org.uk)

Category	Acceptable costs	Unacceptable costs	Notes
Staff members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 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. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 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. - Apprenticeship levy. - Once the award has been made, we won't increase it to reflect increased research costs. This includes increased salaries due to nationally agreed pay awards/inflation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Your application must have an applicant with a tenured position for the duration of the 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. - Salaries must show the separate amounts claimed for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o basic pay

Category	Acceptable costs	Unacceptable costs	Notes
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ national insurance (% salary and total amount, at current rates) ○ London weighting allowance where applicable ○ superannuation (in line with the rate used by the University Superannuation Scheme (USS) or NHS pension scheme).
Consumables	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 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. - Where justified, personal computing costs for named individuals working specifically on the grant. These costs shouldn't be more than £1,000. - Patient and public involvement (PPI) costs. - Consultant costs (such as Statisticians). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Article publishing or open access charges. - Standard per unit IT charges. - Phone/computer accessories (drivers, cases, chargers, batteries). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - You can read more guidance on PPI costs on the NIHR INVOLVE website. - A full justification is required for all consumables.
Equipment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Equipment that's specific to the grant and more than £1000 in value (excluding VAT) should be listed here. Equipment less than £1000 in value may be classed as 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Equipment can't be requested for routine or service use. - The host institution is responsible for equipment. This includes its accommodation, 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - You should add all equipment net of VAT. - Any single piece of equipment costing more than £1000 and

Category	Acceptable costs	Unacceptable costs	Notes
	<p>a consumable, and listed accordingly.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Costs may include purchase, delivery and installation of scientific equipment where that equipment is specific to the grant. - Each piece of equipment should be fully justified. 	<p>operating and servicing costs, and any insurance that may be necessary.</p>	<p>funded by the Award is our property.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 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.
Animals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Animal purchase and transportation costs, maintenance (including food) and experimentation costs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Home Office Licences and animal handling training costs aren't covered. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 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.
Human Tissue	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Cost for the provision of human tissue. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 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.

Category	Acceptable costs	Unacceptable costs	Notes
Conferences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Conference costs can cover a maximum of £1,000 each grant year for each member of salaried staff on the application. - Conference costs can be used to cover travel, registration fee and/or accommodation for meetings/conferences. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - First class travel or accommodation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 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. - Only meetings/conferences directly related to the funded research.
Other	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Funding for computer equipment or software is only allowed if absolutely essential for the project. These costs shouldn't be more than £1,000 for each item unless absolutely necessary. You'll need to provide a strong justification for their inclusion. - We may reduce or remove excessive or ineligible costs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 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 - Annual software licencing fees. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 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. - You'll need to factor in the time to complete a SoECAT and have an AcoRD Specialist sign it so that you can upload it as part of your application. See more about the SoECAT above in section 5.5.

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.

Increase in costs

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, once the award has been made.

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.](#)

1. Directly incurred costs

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.

2. Directly allocated costs

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.

3. Indirect costs

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.

5.6 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.

5.7 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 are held for the duration of the intended projects. You and your institution are responsible for these being in place.
- Any research conducted outside of the UK using animals meets the EU directive 2010/63/EU minimum standards for the protection of animals used for scientific purposes. You're responsible for making sure any international collaborators are following these standards. [Read the 2010/63/EU directive on the EUR-lex website.](#)

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 experimental design guidance for animal studies 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.](#)

5.10 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.

5.11 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.](#)

5.12 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.

6. Criteria for review

Your application is scored on the quality of science and relevance to MS. Applications will be reviewed and scored primarily by members of The Expert Review Network (TERN) with relevant expertise. This includes review by lay members.

> [Read more about TERN on our website.](#)

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.

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.
- 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.
- Once we've received the external reviews, you're invited to respond to the reviewers' comments. You'll have 14 days to submit your rebuttal. We'll advise you of the rebuttal period dates in advance.
- Based on the TERN review scores, applications go through a shortlisting process.
 - o This involves the TERN Review Panel Chair, Vice Chair and a lay panel member discussing the review scores, comments and your rebuttal.
 - o 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.
 - o The remaining applications will be rejected (triaged)
 - o We'll tell all applicants the triage outcomes around a month before funding outcomes are announced.
- 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 \[research@mssociety.org.uk\]\(mailto:research@mssociety.org.uk\).](#)

Project Awards Scoring Guidance for reviewers

Generic criteria
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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.

Project Award specific
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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.

Rating	Score	
Exceptional	5	Highly fundable
High quality	4.5	
Good	4	
Above average	3.5	Potentially fundable
Acceptable	3	
Borderline acceptable	2.5	
Below acceptable	2	Not fundable
Serious scientific weaknesses or other major concerns	1.5	
Not fundable	1	

7. 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.

8. Contact us

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

Thank you for your interest in our research funding.

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

MS National Centre 020 8438 0700
info@mssociety.org.uk

MS Helpline Freephone 0808 800 8000 (weekdays 9am-9pm)
helpline@mssociety.org.uk

Online

www.mssociety.org.uk
facebook.com/MSSociety
twitter.com/mssocietyuk

MS Society Scotland

0131 335 4050
msscotland@mssociety.org.uk

MS Society Northern Ireland

028 9080 2802
nireception@mssociety.org.uk

MS Society Cymru

mscymru@mssociety.org.uk

Multiple Sclerosis Society.
Registered charity nos. 1139257 / SC041990.
Registered as a limited company by guarantee
in England and Wales 07451571.

▶ Let's stop MS together