



The Multiple
Sclerosis
Scientific
Research
Foundation

**MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS
SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH FOUNDATION**

**MULTI-CENTRE, COLLABORATIVE GRANT
GUIDELINES**

Revised 2009

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ADMINISTRATION OF THE COLLABORATIVE GRANTS

The Multiple Sclerosis Scientific Research Foundation (MSSRF) oversees funds to stimulate innovative and collaborative research which will lead to major advances in understanding the pathogenesis of multiple sclerosis (MS) or to new or enhanced therapies for the disease. These funds are separate from the regular research program funded by the Multiple Sclerosis Society of Canada (MSSC) and are meant to support large, multi-centre, collaborative studies that are beyond the scope of the regular research program.

Interested applicant teams must first submit a letter of intent (LOI) by May 1st of each year. It is expected that the majority of the team members, as well as the team leader, will be from Canadian institutions. LOIs will be reviewed and ranked by the Medical Advisory Committee (MAC) of the MSSC. Depending on the MSSRF budget available, applicant teams will be informed in a timely manner whether they are invited to submit a full application with a firm deadline date of September 15th of that year. If the team does not wish to apply within the same calendar year as the LOI, the entire process must be reinitiated commencing with an LOI in any subsequent year.

An international review panel will be assembled to review each full application. Its deliberations, summary and recommendation will be forwarded to a Scientific Oversight Committee (SOC) that will rank the applications, if necessary, and provide additional consideration of budget. Following due diligence and unless there are exceptional circumstances, the recommendations of the SOC will be upheld and transmitted by the MAC to the MSSRF for approval of funding. Funds will be available from May 15th in the year following grant submission. The review process for MSSRF grants will be anonymous, and will be impeccable in quality and integrity.

RESEARCH INVOLVING HUMAN SUBJECTS OR ANIMALS

The MSSRF will not support research involving human subjects without proper approval of the specific research proposed from the grantee institution's human institutional review board. This approval must be signed by the Chairperson of the Committee.

The MSSRF believes that there is evidence of important benefits to people with MS through stem cell research. Accordingly, it will consider funding research on all types of human cells if that research follows federal government legislation.

For research involving animals, approval from the grantee's institutional animal use and care committee must be granted prior to the release of any funds from the MSSRF. This approval must be signed by the Chairperson of the Committee.

IDEMNIFICATION POLICY

The MSSRF is not responsible for any claim, judgment, award, damages, settlement, negligence or malpractice arising from the research project or investigation related to this

grant. The Grantee and Institution acknowledge responsibility for the conduct of research or investigation related to this grant, and release the MSSRF from all claims or liability that may arise from the conduct of research or investigation related to this grant or award resulting from any act or omission on the part of the Grantee and Institution, their employees, agents or representatives to the extent allowed by applicable law.

EQUAL OPPORTUNITY REGULATIONS

The MSSRF adheres to a policy of equal opportunity in employment and requires that all Canadian institutions to which its research or training awards are made adhere to federally mandated equal opportunity policies; institutions outside of Canada must adhere to locally applicable equal opportunity policies.

AVAILABILITY OF RESOURCES

Investigators who receive funds from the MSSRF are expected to share research resources developed with the MSSRF's support with other qualified investigators working on multiple sclerosis. Examples of such resources include (but are not limited to) cell lines and clones, antibodies, and nucleotide and protein sequences.

POLICY ON SCIENTIFIC MISCONDUCT AND FRAUD

Any institution that receives funds from the MSSRF must have written policy guidelines on conflict of interest and scientific misconduct and fraud. It is the responsibility of the institution and the grantee/awardee to inform the MSSRF immediately, in writing, of any institutional investigation into the conduct of an investigator whose work is supported by the MSSRF, and to keep the MSSRF informed in a timely manner of the progress and outcome of such investigation. A finding by the institutional investigation that the investigator was guilty of research fraud or misconduct is sufficient grounds to terminate MSSRF support of a project, and may jeopardize future support for the investigator from the MSSRF.

ELIGIBILITY

Principal Investigator: The designate principal investigator, holding M.D., Ph.D., or equivalent degree, who will assume the scientific and administrative oversight for the operating of the collaborative effort. This principal investigator should be an established, highly qualified scientist with adequate administrative and leadership experience and authority to manage the collaborative program.

Collaborators: In addition to the principal investigator, collaborators, holding M.D., Ph.D., or equivalent degree with appropriate peer-reviewed based funding must be part of the program.

Institutions: The awardee institution is where the principal investigator is located, and is the recipient of the funds. The awardee institution must be located in Canada and must be a non-profit research and/or clinical institution.

GUIDELINES FOR SUBMISSION OF A LETTER OF INTENT (LOI)

Application Procedure: The MSSRF has converted to a Web-based apply online facility for the submission of all research applications. This new facility can be accessed through the MSSC's website: <https://www.mscanadagrants.ca>

Timing: The deadlines for LOI submission is May 1st. Incomplete LOIs, or LOIs that are submitted after the deadline, will not be accepted.

Term and Amount of Award: The MSSRF program will provide support in a total amount of up to \$1.5 million a year per project for a usual initial term of up to three years. As the MSSRF is a Canadian non-profit entity, the award will not cover overhead/indirect costs or the salary of principal investigators (PIs). Funds are made available quarterly during that (usually) three-year period based on receipt of a satisfactory annual progress report.

Documents: The following list are required documents that will be requested for upload to complete the LOI, some of the uploads will have templates provided.

- **Letter of Intent Contents:** It is expected that a complete LOI will outline the research program and indicate the participating investigators. Using a text of 12-font size, and page margins of at least 0.75 inches, and a maximum of five pages (including figures but excluding references), addition pages will not be reviewed. The LOI must clearly outline each of the elements below:
 - The relevant background and objectives of the research program to be undertaken by the team over the period of funding
 - How the team effort can lead to a major advance in understanding the cause of MS or to the development or improvement of therapy for the disease;
 - The extent of collaboration between members of the investigative team, with an explanation of the anticipated value added to the research program through the synergy of the group (i.e. why this cannot be funded through one or more regular operating grants and/or conducted at fewer sites);
 - Novelty and the uniqueness of the projects;
 - A description of the importance and novelty of hypotheses or questions to be addressed and expected findings;
 - The ability of the group to carry out the program of research proposed;
 - The preliminary plan for the research program and schedule of work, including integration of work by the collaborators (i.e. why this should not be a string of independent studies);

- The plan, including proposed organizational structures for engaging and linking with groups (researchers or patients) that will ultimately use the research findings; and
- The nature and extent of the loss to the Canadian MS community were this project not funded.
- **CV:** for a maximum of five of the key applicants, including the team leader. Please include a two page maximum CV for each that includes information on grants held (source, type, title, amount/yr, duration, any overlap with the studies outlined in LOI), and publications relevant to the application from the last five years.
- **External Referees:** Suggest the names of up to 10 external referees. The list must include international referees although reviewers based in Canada will not be excluded if they have the relevant expertise and are not in conflict. Applicants may request to exclude referees.
- **Required Signatures:** The signature of the Principal Investigator that will lead the Collaborative Grant, the Chair of the Department of the Principal Investigator and the Dean of the Faculty or Director of the Institution of the Principal Investigator.

GUIDELINES FOR FULL SUBMISSION

Eligibility: Full submission is only open for the applicants that have received noticed inviting them to submit a full application.

Application Procedure: The MSSRF has converted to a Web-based apply online facility for the submission of all research applications. This new facility can be accessed through the MSSC's website: <https://www.mscanadagrants.ca>.

Timing: The deadline for full application submissions is September 15th of each year.

Documents: The following list are required documents that will be requested for upload to complete the full submission, some of the uploads will have templates provided.

- **Research Proposal Contents:** A maximum of 30 pages (12-font size, and page margins of at least 0.75 inches), describe the proposal as guided by the headings below and addressing the review criteria for the MSSRF grant program. Page limits do not include references, tables, charts, figures and photographs (can be part of appendix). Legends should be succinct. Detailed description of methods and discussion of results should be included in the body of the proposal. They should not be in legends nor included as an attachment. Questionnaires and consent forms may be attached, where applicable. General criteria for assessing applications are listed below:

Overview of the team's research program

- Describe the background, objectives, hypotheses, approaches,

research plan and milestones of the proposed team; clearly state how the team effort can lead to a major advance in understanding the cause of MS and/or to the development or improvement of therapy for the disease;

- Describe the nature of the team's linkages and how the results will be integrated to achieve the objectives;
- Describe the anticipated value of the results highlighting the relevance of the scientific or technical advances, new expertise and the innovative techniques that will be developed; and
- Clearly state why this cannot be funded through one or more regular operating grants and/or fewer sites.

Background

- Relate the proposal to current research developments in the field referring to the current literature and explain the relationship of the research program to other initiatives in this area in Canada and abroad; and
- Describe the background research on which the research team has been built.

Advantages of a team approach

- Explain how the team brings added value, in terms of the approach to MS, by showing how the research components together form an integrated research program able to address issues which could not readily be approached were the components to be funded separately; and
- Show how working as a team will result in sharing of intellectual material (e.g. specimens, patients, cells, animals, databases), equipment and facilities and reduce redundancies in research efforts.

Organizational aspects of team structure, interactions and communications

- The administrative and operational structures and their roles in coordinating activities, enhancing interactions among team members, monitoring progress, setting schedules and controlling expenditures;
- The responsibility for planning, decision making and resource allocation within the team;
- The communications mechanisms proposed for internal communications among the team members and how they will accelerate the exchange of research results, material and techniques within the team; and
- Plans for dissemination of the team's research findings through

linkages with the appropriate user community.

For each major component research project and core facility

- Identify the project leader and participants;
- Summarize the specific objectives, hypotheses, approaches, research plan, methods, and milestones;
- Provide details on where the research will be carried out;
- Describe the pertinent expertise, role and expected contributions of the team members and how they will be integrated; and,
- Describe how the project fits into the overall research program and contributes to achieving the objectives of the MSSRF.

Separate from the 30 page proposal, below are requested documents that are required to be uploaded on the application website <https://www.mscanadagrants.ca>:

- **Budget:** Funding requests on the Foundation grant may include:
 - Research operating costs for the proposed collaborative research program, which must be distinct in its objectives from those for which team members currently receive funding;
 - Purchase of equipment and maintenance contracts for common services and shared facilities;
 - Costs of data collection, database and maintenance of information holdings directly related to the MSSRF grant program;
 - Costs of regional, national and international networking activities, including collaboration, planning, and knowledge exchange activities, directly related to the MSSRF grant program;
 - Salaries of research assistants and technicians who will enhance the collaborative research productivity of the team; PI salary is not eligible for funding;
 - Support of research trainees, at the rate specified by the MS Society of Canada for trainees. Foundation grants are expected to provide a superior training environment;
 - Salary of a professional coordinator and/or administrative assistant;
 - Costs involved in linkage with and dissemination of research findings to those who use the results, as appropriate for the research program, (including other researchers, the public, practitioner and policy communities, and the industrial sector);
 - Institutional overhead is not permitted.
- **CV:** Provide the CV for all co-applicants, please follow the instructions as found on the CIHR common CV module <http://www.commoncv.net/> and comply with all requests. Where the CIHR CV module asks the applicant to indicate %

budgetary overlap and describe the budgetary and scientific relationships of other funds held or requested to the proposed research. Proposed research refers to all components of the MSSRF Collaborative Grant in which the applicant is involved

- **Letters of Collaboration:** A general letter indicating the willingness and awareness of all co-applicants to participate in the grant. Signatures of all co-applicants will be required
- **Letters of Support:** The letters of support are to be submitted by those that are providing external support and services
- **Appendix:** additional supporting documents, publications, letter of support maybe added here
- **Publications:** A total of up to 10 publications per team from the past five years, relevant to the MSSRF Collaborative Grant proposal, may be uploaded
- **Required Signatures:** The signature of the principal applicant, Department Head and Dean of Faculty or Head of Research Institution

REVIEW PROCESS

MSSRF Collaborative Grant applications will be evaluated as a single, integrated entity. While each research component included in the application must be meritorious, it is critical to demonstrate that the MSSRF Collaborative Grant brings added value, in terms of the approach to MS, health care, and the speed and efficiency with which new knowledge in MS will be generated, or translated into improvements in health, when compared with funding the proposed work as a series of separate operating grants.

General criteria for assessing applications are listed below. Because different applicant teams will emphasize different approaches to research and to knowledge translation, it is understood that reviewers and committees will weigh questions such as these differently from one application to another.

Applications will be assessed on the extent to which they:

- Approach the research issue through an original, innovative, coordinated and feasible research plan which will generate valid, reliable and useful data;
- Demonstrate that funding of the MSSRF Collaborative Grant will enhance the understanding and accelerate the resolution of MS, when compared to independent research projects;
- Contain novel ideas;
- Constitute a major new effort not previously applied to MS;
- Consist of team members who have been productive, creative and original in their approach to research, or who have the potential to develop these

attributes. The inclusion of a member who is previously not involved in MS research is advantageous;

- Key members have a track record of having participated and/or having provided leadership to collaborative research teams; and
- Describe a research training program that provides a superior experience for graduate and post-doctoral trainees, including those with a health professional background.

Each full application received by September 15th will be assigned an independent review panel. The chair of each panel will preferably be a member of the MSSC's MAC, but in exceptional circumstances he/she can be a non-MAC member. The chair of each review panel will be appointed by the MAC chair and the MSSC's Senior Vice-President, Research and Programs. If the MAC chair is in conflict with an application, previous MAC chairs or another member of the MAC with no declared conflicts, along with the, MSSC's Senior Vice-President, Research and Programs will appoint the chair for that application. Each chair, in consultation with the chair of the MAC (or, in conflicts, previous MAC chairs or other non-conflicted MAC members), will appoint a minimum of three and up to a maximum of six reviewers to their respective committee. These reviewers shall be, and will remain, anonymous to the applicant team. It is imperative that the chair and reviewers of each panel declare no conflict with the applicants and must not be a co-investigator on any other MSSRF grant(s) being reviewed in the same cycle. The chair and reviewers will be asked to sign a confidentiality document and must guarantee confidentiality about the content and deliberation of all MSSRF grants in the review cycle.

Each reviewer of a given application will receive a complete copy of that application by the 3rd week of September and will be expected to submit written comments, identifying major issues in particular, by mid November. All written reviews will be distributed amongst the members of the review panel for the particular grant. A conference call will be held by mid November amongst the review panel members and the chair of a particular application to identify major issues. Following this call, the unidentified critiques which focus on major issues will be summarized by the chair of the review panel and sent to the team leader of an application. The team leader will be required to rebut the reviewers' comments in writing within two weeks of receiving the comments. The team's written response will then be circulated to the members of the review panel. .

A second conference call of the review panel will be held to determine whether the applicants have addressed the major issues identified. The review panel then comes to a consensus on its recommendation of "Approve" or "Not approve". If the consensus is to "Approve", the level of enthusiasm for funding will then be considered. Budget considerations will be reviewed and a recommendation of funding amount made.

The final recommendation phase will then begin. All material stemming from each review panel will be provided to the SOC, to be chaired by a non-conflicted MAC member who has not been previously involved in the review process of MSSRF grants of that cycle. The chair of the SOC will be appointed by the chair of the MAC (or, in

conflicts, previous MAC chairs or other non-conflicted MAC members) and the MSSC's Senior Vice-President, Research and Programs. The chair of the SOC will then form his committee, which will include each chair and one member from each review panel in addition to other external experts as needed. The SOC will be familiar with the gist of all application(s), and all the attendant critiques, comments and budgetary issues. The SOC will be aware of the funds available before its deliberations. Ranking by the SOC may occur, which will be helped by the level of enthusiasm of approval from the primary review panels, with additional discussions by the SOC in attempts to equilibrate across team grants.

The recommendation of the SOC will be forwarded to the MAC. Following due diligence and discussions, the MAC is expected (unless in exceptional circumstances) to uphold the decision of the SOC and transmit this decision to the Trustees of the MSSRF for recommendation of funding. The decision is final and cannot be appealed.

CONDITIONS OF AWARD

Notification: The principal investigator will be advised by letter of the duration and amount of the grant awarded. A copy of this letter, along with a signed copy of the applicant's acceptance letter will be sent to the specified financial officer at the grantee institution with the first quarter payment of the grant. Payment of the grant will be remitted quarterly to the financial officer at the grantee institution. Payment of subsequent years is dependent upon a) receipt, review, and approval by the MSSRF of bi-annual financial reports and b) receipt, review and approval by the MSSRF and MAC of annual research progress reports.

Renewal Grants: Collaborative Grants are not renewed automatically. Support beyond the term originally approved is dependent upon submission and approval of a renewal application for a new grant.

If a renewal grant is approved for support, funds will not be made available until the MSSRF and MAC have received and deemed to be reasonable and acceptable a report of all funds expended during the term of the previous project.

Unspent Funds: Budgets in applications for grants are estimates of the funds required to perform the research indicated, unexpended funds may be carried over to the next year. If renewal support is provided, remaining funds from the previous grant will be applied to the first payment of the renewal grant and the renewal budget will be reduced accordingly. Only in certain circumstances will the renewal budget not be reduced.

However, unexpended funds remaining at the termination of the grant must be returned to the MSSRF within 6 months if renewal support is not awarded

Extension of Term: An extension of the term of a grant without additional funds may be approved when requested and justified in writing. Extensions of term will be for either 6 or 12 months and may only be requested once for any given grant. A request for an

extension must include: (1) the amount of money to be carried into the extension period; (2) a statement of why the funds were not used in the original grant period; (3) a statement of how the funds will be used during the extension. A request for an extension must be made at least 90 days before the termination date of a grant.

Transfer of a Grant: The MSSRF retains the right to transfer a grant from one institution to another (only if institution is Canadian), along with the transfer of the principal investigator, upon the principal investigator's written request. For the approval of such a transfer, the MSSRF requires a letter of acknowledgment signed by the new institution. For research involving human subjects and/or animals, written approval from the new institution's Institutional Review Board and/or the Animal Care and Use Committee must be received prior to initiation of payment. In addition, the original institution must submit an acceptable report of expenditures and return all unexpended funds to the MSSRF before a final transfer can be made. No interruption of financial support should be involved if the request to transfer the grant is received by the MSSRF at least 90 days prior to the anticipated date of transfer and the financial report is submitted from the old institution prior to the transfer date.

Change of Principal Investigator: In most cases, a grant terminates when the principal investigator becomes unable to continue supervision of the research. However, within 30 days after such an occurrence, the original institution may request that the grant be continued with the responsibility transferred to a new principal investigator until the grant can be terminated appropriately or until a new, complete application can be submitted by the new principal investigator. Such changes cannot be effected without prior approval in writing by the MSSRF.

Termination of grant: A research grant may be terminated before the end of the project: (1) if the principal investigator requests, in writing, that the award be terminated; (2) if the principal investigator is unable to carry out the research at the original institution; (3) if the sponsoring institution requests in writing that the award be terminated because of the awardee's termination of his/her academic appointment; (4) if the principal investigator fails to notify the MSSRF of any change in his/her affiliation with the department or institution on record at the time the award was made; (5) if the principal investigator changes any aspect of the award from that which was originally approved by the MSSRF, including significant changes in the specific aims of the research studies, without prior notification and approval by the MSSRF; (6) when annual reports of progress are not received from the principal investigator by January 15th of every year of each award anniversary year; (7) if the principal investigator is found by an institutional investigation to have committed scientific misconduct or fraud; or (8) by action of the Board of Directors of the MSSRF.

ACCOUNTING PROCEDURES

Bi-Annual Financial Reports: As of April 1st 2009, the MSSRF will release the first and second quarter of the first year of funding to the grantee. From that point forward, it is the responsibility of the grantee to demonstrate bi-annually that the majority (greater than

75%) of the funds previously provided are expended prior to release of the following quarter payments. Therefore, we request that a financial report be completed bi-annually and returned at least two weeks before the end of the half year (quarters end June 30th, September 30th, December 30th, and March 31st), if additional funds are required at this point. If the grantee has not expended at least 75% of the funds previously provided, the grantee will need to submit a financial report once 75% of the funds have been spent in order to receive the next two quarterly payments from the MSSRF. Future quarterly payments will continue to be contingent upon receiving confirmation bi-annually that at least 75% of funds previously provided have been spent. If it is determined that the funds are not expended or properly expended, the MSSRF has the right to withhold funds until further notice. Forms will be provided.

Final Financial Reports: A full account of all expenses incurred over the entire lifecycle of a research project is due within 90 days of the termination of the grant. Unexpended funds remaining as of the termination date of the grant must be returned to the MSSRF, if renewal support is not awarded. Grantees agree to return to the MSSRF the remaining funds within six months following the termination date. Forms will be provided.

PROGRESS REPORTS

Annual Research Progress Report: An annual research progress report is due January 15th of every year. The report must include a written description of progress made, referring to the hypothesis and aims proposed in the original application. Compliance with this policy is necessary for ongoing funding of your research project. A template for the annual research progress report will be provided.

Final Research Report: A final report of the progress is due within 90 days of the termination of your grant. This report must include documentation of all milestones achieved during the entire cycle with reference to the initial hypothesis and aims of the research project. A template for the final research report will be provided.

PUBLICATIONS AND COMMUNICATION

Publications: The MSSRF expects that the results of research will be published in appropriate journals. The responsibility for publications lies with the principal investigator. The results of any work supported by a grant from the MSSRF must be acknowledged in all dissemination materials (e.g., publications, scientific exhibits, scientific presentations, press releases, etc.) The following acknowledgment or its equivalent should be used: “This investigation was supported (in part) by a grant(s) from the Multiple Sclerosis Society of Canada and the Multiple Sclerosis Scientific Foundation.” As soon as a manuscript is accepted for publication, it is expected that the grantee will inform the MSSC’s Research Department with the name of the journal, title of article and expected date of publication.

Media and Communications: The MSSRF expects that if a grantee’s host institution and/or publisher is preparing a press release or other media announcement related to an

MSSRF funded grant, the institution and/or publisher and the researcher shall contact and inform the MSSC's Research Department in advance.

Knowledge Translation: To help increase stakeholder awareness of the research funded by the MSSRF, the grantees may expect the MSSRF to call upon them during the term of the grant to summarize research related activities to a lay audience or the media. It is also expected that the grantee participate in public awareness events that promote awareness the MSSRF's research program.