



MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH FOUNDATION (MSSRF)

MULTI-CENTRE, COLLABORATIVE TEAM GRANT (Team Grant)

PROGRAM GUIDE

Revised April 2017

1. BACKGROUND AND GRANT DESCRIPTION	2
a) What is the MSSRF?.....	2
b) What are the objectives of the MSSRF?	2
c) What is the Multi-Centre, Collaborative Team Grant?.....	2
d) Term and funding	2
2. APPLICATION GUIDELINES.....	3
a) Who is eligible to apply?.....	3
b) What constitutes a collaborative team?	3
c) Application format.....	3
d) Online application procedure	5
3. REVIEW PROCESS.....	5
a) Review of LOI	5
b) Review of Full Application	5
c) Review procedures and rebuttal process.....	6

1. BACKGROUND AND GRANT DESCRIPTION

a) What is the MSSRF?

The MS Scientific Research Foundation was established in 1973 with an initial investment of \$1,000. Over the years with financial support primarily from generous donations to the MS Society of Canada, the Foundation has become the largest fund in the world dedicated strictly to MS research. The goal for the Foundation is to support innovative and transformative research in multiple sclerosis (MS) beyond the scope of the MS Society of Canada's (MSSC) regular granting program. In particular, the focus is on multi-site, interdisciplinary research studies which foster collaboration and accelerate fundamental advances in understanding and treating MS.

b) What are the objectives of the MSSRF?

Fund high impact research with translational potential: Fund research that can have a major influence in our understanding of the cause and pathogenesis of MS, and have a significant impact on improving health and quality of life in people with MS within the years of funding.

Fund novel approaches and ideas in MS research that stimulate lateral thinking and innovation: Fund research that requires out-of-the-box thinking and uses approaches that differ from the conventional ways of studying MS.

Stimulate collaboration and encourage mentorship: Ensure synergy between different scientific expertise and academic and health institutions in order to leverage resources and address complex issues in MS.

c) What is the Multi-Centre, Collaborative Team Grant?

The Multi-Centre, Collaborative (Team Grant) is designed to fund MS research conducted by scientists in Canadian institutions in collaboration with other national and international experts in the field. Studies funded by the Team Grant stimulate frequent exchange of knowledge, data, and research techniques, and provides opportunities for scientific training for younger researchers. The Team Grant supports transformative research that can have significant scientific, socio-economic and health impacts. The Team Grant is supported by the MSSRF with funds which are separate from the MSSC regular research program.

d) Term and funding

Applicants can request a maximum of \$4,500,000 for a term of up to three years. Based on the nature of the research, applicants may request to extend the funding term to a maximum of 5 years; however, proper justification must be provided. The Team Grant is intended to support research that can provide immediate translational impacts during the term of the grant. Thus, there is a maximum one term for funding, and no renewals or extension funding will be granted.

2. APPLICATION GUIDELINES

a) Who is eligible to apply?

Each Team Grant must include a collaborative team led by a Lead Principal Investigator (PI) who will oversee operations of the grant and the activities of the collaborative members. The Lead PI must hold an M.D., Ph.D., or equivalent degree, have an academic or research appointment, and be conducting research in a recognized Canadian institution. The Lead PI need not be a Canadian citizen or permanent resident. The Lead PI will assume scientific and operational oversight for the study and ensure a collaborative effort. The Lead PI should be established, highly qualified scientists with adequate administrative and leadership experience and authority to manage grant operations. In order to truly encourage collaboration, it is advised that the Lead PI and Co-PIs are based at different institutions to leverage resources; however, there is no limit to the number of Co-PIs from the same home institution.

b) What constitutes a collaborative team?

A collaborative team must involve each of the following:

- **Lead Principal Investigator(s)** who will provide scientific and operational leadership for the team from a recognized Canadian academic institution(s).
- **Co-Principal Investigator(s)** who will provide scientific and operational support for the team from a recognized Canadian academic institution(s). Note: Co-PI(s) conducting research at an institution(s) outside of Canada may be considered eligible under certain circumstances. If the team consists of one or more international Co-PIs, justification must be provided in the application indicating that the proposal would be significantly improved by having certain components of the research being conducted by Co-PIs at study sites outside of Canada.
- **Collaborative members** who provide a specific service (e.g. access to equipment, training in a specialized technique, statistical analysis, etc.). A collaborator need not be directly involved in MS research, but should provide skills and scientific expertise that is advantageous to advancing the goals of the study.
- **Trainees** (Postdoctoral Fellows, Doctoral and Master's candidates) who support the research study and will have the opportunity for further training in the research project.
- **Interdisciplinary, multi-institutional activity** which includes proactive engagement of all collaborating researchers and external stakeholders such as people affected by MS, clinicians, etc. The collaborative team demonstrates a concerted effort, and participates in knowledge and data exchange, training and mentorship.

c) Application format

The Team Grant application consists of a Letter of Intent. Successful Letters of Intent are subsequently invited to submit a Full Application. The Letter of Intent and Full Application are completed online using the MSSC research grants and awards management system [Easygrants](#).

Letter of Intent (LOI)

Interested applicants must first submit an LOI. The LOI outlines the purpose of the study, researchers and institutions involved, and potential transformational impact on understanding and treating MS. A Lead PI who currently holds an MSSRF Collaborative Team Grant must apply as a new applicant, and the proposed research must consist of new questions and approaches. As well, the Lead PI must have achieved successful completion of all milestones from the previous grant to be considered for the full application stage. LOI submissions will include:

- Relevant background pertaining to the research topic that will be addressed in the study.
- A description of the hypothesis and scientific questions to be addressed and why they are important.
- An explanation of a novel proposed research plan, including descriptions of the study design and methodology.
- An explanation of how this research will lead to significant advancements in the MS field and have a beneficial outcome on treatment and quality of life for people affected by MS.
- A description of the extent of collaboration between members of the investigative team, with an explanation of the anticipated value added to the study through the synergy of the group (explain why this research effort cannot be achieved through individual operating grants).
- An description of how the collaborative team will actively engage people who are affected by MS in the research process and share research outputs with knowledge end-users.
- A description of expected outcomes and their impact on the scientific field and MS community, and an indication of how the research team intends to sustain key aspects of the research program and/or infrastructure beyond the term of the grant.

Full Application

This stage is only available for those applicants who have submitted an LOI and have been invited to submit a Full Application. The Full Application includes a project description, lay summary, detailed scientific proposal outlining research questions and methodologies, a breakdown of the budget, research milestones and a number of other required supporting documents. The purpose of the Full Application is to provide an overview of how the research will be carried out and how each investigator will contribute towards the overall goals of the study. It is imperative that the application demonstrates collaboration, synergy, feasibility and a significant impact on people affected by MS. The application must also show that the research is being conducted in high-quality research environments under the leadership of an experienced investigator(s).

For further details and a full list of required documents for the LOI and Full Application, please refer to the [MSSRF Team Grant Application Guidelines](#).

d) Online application procedure

The MSSC and MSSRF use an online research grants and awards management system that enables researchers to apply for, and review, applications on the Web. The system is called Easygrants and can be accessed through the following website: <https://www.mscanadagrants.ca>

Interested applicants must create a profile on Easygrants through which they can complete the application process. Templates for the required documents for the LOI and Full Application can be downloaded from Easygrants, completed and uploaded in the applicant's profile. Note that all required documents must be fully completed and uploaded on Easygrants prior to the due date for the application to be considered. **Incomplete applications will be disqualified from the competition and will not be reviewed.**

3. REVIEW PROCESS

a) Review of LOI

LOIs will be reviewed and ranked by non-conflicted members of the Medical Advisory Committee (MAC) of the MSSC. Applicants will be informed in a timely manner whether they are invited to submit a full application.

LOIs will be assessed on the extent to which they:

- Demonstrate a novel and feasible approach that is highly relevant to the MS field.
- Outline an organized and integrated governance structure led by established, competent investigators and involving team members with productive track records.
- Describe a team effort that will lead to major advances in the field and improvements in health and quality of life of people affected by MS.
- Show that the outcomes cannot be attained through individual efforts, such as operating grants, but rather through a coordinated research plan that involves interdisciplinary collaboration.
- Describe how people affected by MS will be meaningfully engaged and integrated into the research program.

b) Review of Full Application

Each Full Application will be assigned and reviewed by a non-conflicted international review panel selected by the MSSC specifically for the grant(s) and will contain members with relevant expertise. Members of the panel will remain anonymous to the applicants. In order to bridge the LOI and Full Application reviews and provide appropriate context, LOI review comments submitted by the MAC will be provided to the international review panel during the initial at-home review. If necessary, a

member of the LOI review panel may be invited to attend the Full Application review conference call for the purposes of clarifying any comments raised during the LOI review.

Applications will be assessed on the extent to which they:

- Address a hypothesis that is relevant to the field of MS.
- Approach the hypothesis and research questions through a novel, innovative, and coordinated research plan that will generate valid and relevant data.
- Show that the study budget and milestone timelines are realistic and feasible.
- Demonstrate that funding of the Team Grant will enhance the understanding and accelerate the resolution of MS, when compared to research conducted through independent research projects.
- Build a team of investigators and collaborators who have been consistently productive, creative and original in their approach to research, or who have the potential to develop these attributes.
- Demonstrate frequent exchange of research knowledge and provide research training opportunities for trainees.
- Outline a clear, timely and feasible research management plan with a reasonable number of attainable milestones.
- Provide a detailed public engagement and involvement plan that describes how people affected by MS will be meaningfully engaged in the research process, and how research progress and outcomes will be effectively communicated to the public and other knowledge end-users.
- Describe the impact the research results will have on the field of MS and on the lives of people affected by MS both during and beyond the term of the grant, and discuss how certain activities and/or infrastructure related to the grant will be sustained after funding for the grant has ended.

c) Review procedures and rebuttal process

Evaluation of the Full Application(s) involves three steps: 1) an in-depth "at-home" review, 2) an initial teleconference during which the international review panel will discuss their review and list any questions or concerns that the applicants would need to address via a written rebuttal and 3) a second teleconference to discuss whether applicants addressed the committee's questions and concerns in their rebuttal, and to make a final recommendation for funding.

During the "at-home" review, each reviewer will read the Full Application and LOI reviewer comments and provide a written appraisal of the application; if there is more than one Full Application, reviewers will be assigned to a specific application that best aligns with their expertise. During the teleconference review meeting, the Chair of the review panel will lead the members of the panel in a discussion of the strengths and weaknesses of the application(s) and determine the overall enthusiasm level of the panel for funding the application(s). Depending on the overall

enthusiasm level, the panel may request that the applicant provide a written response (rebuttal) to the reviewers' comments within **14 business days** of receiving the comments. Following the teleconference review meeting, the Chair will provide a summary of the written comments and feedback from the conference call to the applicant, including the option to provide a rebuttal, if applicable. Upon receiving the written rebuttal, the international review panel will review and discuss the response to determine if the major issues have been adequately addressed. The review panel will then arrive at a recommendation consensus to either "Approve" or "Not Approve" the grant for funding. A final recommendation will be brought forward to the MAC and subsequently the MSSRF Board for final approval. The number of applications considered for funding, if any, will be determined by available MSSRF funds.

For online support please contact:

msresearchgrants@mssociety.ca

Please check the MSSC website for competition dates and deadlines.