



## **The Multiple Sclerosis Scientific Research Foundation is seeking applications for the Wellness Research Innovation Grant (WRIG)**

REVISED: April 12, 2016

The MS Scientific Research Foundation (MSSRF) is pleased to launch the Wellness Research Innovation Grant (WRIG) – an innovative funding opportunity that aims to advance research in wellness and lifestyle, and ultimately lead to wellness solutions for people affected by multiple sclerosis (MS). The Wellness Research Innovation Grant was borne out of the [MS Wellness Survey](#), an online questionnaire sent out in 2015 that was designed to capture the voices of people living with MS about their needs, practices, and gaps related to nutrition, physical activity and emotional wellbeing.

The MSSRF will award up to four grants valued at up to \$40,000 each. The aim of these grants is to translate research findings into innovative wellness solutions that will improve health and quality of life for people affected by MS. These solutions may include, but are not limited to, tools and technologies for daily living, symptom management interventions, community-based programs, and educational resources and guidelines. Applicants to this funding opportunity will be required to engage people affected by MS in a collaborative way, to ensure that their perspective is represented and integrated throughout the study, and that their input plays a large part in the design, implementation, analysis and translation of the study and its outcomes. Applicants will also need to draw from the results of the MS Wellness Survey in formulating their research question(s) and addressing key priorities and gaps identified by respondents of the survey.

At the same time, the MSSRF recognizes that innovators outside of the academic research space can make unique and outstanding contributions to the advancement of health and wellbeing. The Wellness Research Innovation Grant is designed to tap into this source of innovation and experience by encouraging the formation of partnerships between academic researchers and community innovators, including clinical practitioners, technology companies, community-based organizations, policy makers, and educators.

## **BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE**

### **a. What is Wellness?**

MS is a chronic condition that can have an enormous impact on a person's ability to carry out everyday tasks, perform on the job, engage in social relationships and live life to its fullest potential. While managing MS is possible with medication, people are becoming more aware of complementary approaches to dealing with symptoms and leading a healthy lifestyle, such as being physically active, maintaining a balanced diet, getting adequate restful sleep, fostering positive relationships, and effectively coping with stress. Each of these factors contributes to a person's overall **wellness**. People affected by MS are keen to take ownership of their disease and to have the proper tools and knowledge at their disposal to make informed decisions about their wellness and adopting wellness approaches that are suitable to their needs and lifestyle.

### **b. Wellness Priorities**

One mechanism for capturing the collective voice of people living with MS is to firmly integrate them into the research process. As part of this ongoing effort, the MS Society of Canada (MSSC) launched an online MS Wellness Survey in 2015 that received an overwhelming response from the MS community. The purpose of the survey was to gather feedback from people affected by MS about how they view wellness, what they do to achieve optimal wellness, and areas related to wellness in which they would like to see more research. Ultimately, the survey allowed respondents to play a vital role in informing a wellness-oriented research strategy.

The three key wellness areas in the 2015 MS Wellness Survey included: Nutrition, Physical Activity and Emotional Wellbeing. Respondents of the MS Wellness Survey identified unmet needs and priorities in these areas. They also had the opportunity to be "researcher for a day" and create their own projects or ideas that they felt would address these wellness gaps.

To read detailed results of the MS Wellness Survey, consult the [Additional Resources for Applicants](#) section provided as a standalone document.

### **c. Community Engagement**

An integral component of the Wellness Research Innovation Grant is the engagement of people affected by MS throughout the research process. By collaboratively engaging members of the MS community, researchers will be better equipped to identify specific questions that are relevant to the community, empower people affected by MS to actively participate in and contribute to research, and deliver an immediate impact that can be translated directly to people affected by MS in the clinic, at home, and/or in the community.

A cornerstone of this funding opportunity is the requirement that the applicant engage people affected by MS in their research. A successful engagement strategy can take many forms, but is underpinned by a strong knowledge translation plan, a framework for including the voice of people affected by MS at all levels, multi-way communication and collaboration, and capacity building in the community to ensure that outcomes from the research will benefit people affected by MS in the long term.

#### **d. Building Partnerships Between Academic Researchers and Community Innovators**

In order to maximize the reach of the Wellness Research Innovation Grant, the MSSRF aims to attract the most talented and imaginative community innovators and encourage them to build cross-sector partnerships with academic researchers and people affected by MS. To that end, the MSSRF welcomes eligible community-based organizations and enterprises to spearhead the application to this funding opportunity and be responsible for the direction of the proposed research activities. Applicants not affiliated with an academic institution will be required to partner with a researcher at an academic institution for the full application stage.

A community innovator is defined as a Canadian partner organization from the public, private or non-profit sector. This includes, but is not limited to, clinical practitioners, technology companies, community-based organizations, policy makers, and educators. The organization represented by the community innovator must be based in Canada.

### **APPLICATION GUIDELINES**

#### **a. Application Requirements**

The application must address the priorities identified in the MS Wellness Survey and/or stem from one of the projects or ideas that were proposed by the survey respondents. The application must also integrate people affected by MS as meaningful contributors to the research using a detailed community engagement plan, through mechanisms such as investigator-driven consultations, involvement in a steering committee or as a project advisor, input into study design and methodology, and/or disseminating study results to the wider community through a knowledge translation plan.

#### **b. Applicant Eligibility**

The intellectual leadership and governance for a formal partnership may come from within the research community and/or from partner organizations from the public, private and non-profit sectors. However, the grant funding, once awarded, must be administered only by an eligible academic institution. Applicants from the research community must be eligible under the

policies of their host institution to submit an application. The following is a list of appropriate personnel who may apply to the competition:

- **Principal Applicant (PA):** The PA is listed as the primary grant applicant and is responsible for overseeing the overall direction of the proposed project. The PA may be a researcher who holds a faculty appointment at a Canadian institution, or a Canadian community innovator. If the PA is a community innovator, he/she **must** list a researcher from an academic institution as a Co-Principal Applicant on the proposal. The MSSRF reserves the right to assess the eligibility of a community innovator at any time. If the PA is an academic researcher, he/she is strongly encouraged, although not required, to seek a partnership with a community innovator in order to strengthen the application.
- **Co-Principal Applicant (Co-PA):** The Co-PA is an individual who shares responsibility for the direction of the proposed research project with the PA and meets the eligibility criteria of a PA. In the case that the PA is a community innovator, **at least one** academic researcher affiliated with a Canadian institution must be listed as a Co-PA.
- **Institution:** A Canadian institution that is recognized by the Tri-Council Agencies.

#### c. Term and Amount

Total funding available is up to \$40,000 CAD per project for up to one year. Up to four projects may be funded in total. Projects are non-renewable.

#### d. Application Format

The Wellness Research Innovation Grant is staged and consists of two parts: a short pre-application and a full application. Interested applicants must apply online using the grant administration database [Easygrants](#).

##### 1. Pre-Application

Interested applicants must first submit a pre-application. The pre-application outlines the purpose of the project, the researchers and community innovators involved, a brief public engagement strategy, and the potential transformational impact on wellness for people affected by MS. Specifically, the pre-application will discuss:

- The objective of the project and the research questions to be addressed.
- How the research findings will translate into innovative wellness solutions that will improve health and quality of life for people affected by MS.

- The specific gaps, priorities, and/or ideas to emerge from the MS Wellness Survey that will be addressed by the proposal. Indicate the specific priority and/or selected “researcher for a day” questions and outline why they were chosen.
- A brief strategy for engaging people affected by MS and knowledge translation plan.
- A partnership plan, where applicable, including a description and justification for the proposed partnership

The maximum length for the pre-application is **2 pages**.

**A note on partnerships:** PAs designated as community innovators **must** partner with an academic researcher for their project. For the pre-application stage, it is not necessary to have a partnership in place or even a specific partner in mind; however, applicants should provide a rationale for pursuing a partnership and give an indication of the sector, discipline, and/or community in which they are seeking partners. Applicants are encouraged to contact the MS Society of Canada at [msresearchgrants@mssociety.ca](mailto:msresearchgrants@mssociety.ca) if they require assistance in identifying partners for their application. It is possible that PAs with similar applications may be partnered with another PA to enhance the proposed project and the collaboration effort.

## **2. Full Application**

This stage is only available to those applicants who have submitted a pre-application and have been invited to submit a full application. The full application includes a project description, lay summary, description of relevance, detailed proposal outlining research questions, rationale and methodologies, partnership plan, a public engagement strategy, a breakdown of the budget, and a number of other required supporting documents. Applicants who have pursued a partnership with an academic investigator and/or community innovator are required to have specific partners in mind and listed as co-PAs.

### **Applications must include the following:**

- i. Brief project description:** In 100 words or less, provide a brief project description of the proposed research project.
- ii. Lay summary:** In 200 words or less, provide a lay summary of your research project.
- iii. Relevance to MS description:** In 200 words or less, describe the relevance of your research project to MS. This description must be written in lay language.
- iv. Other personnel:** Complete list of names, institutions and/or organizations and Co-PA(s).

- v. **Budget:** Budget categories are divided into Research Staff, Materials, Supplies, Services, Travel and Equipment. You may apply for a maximum of 1 year of funding. Funds cannot be used for indirect/overhead costs. Use the budget notes section to provide details and justification of all budget items relative to the proposed research. You may include electronic copies of quotations and other information useful to the reviewers in the Appendix.

**Uploads:** Required documents that must be uploaded for this application are listed below.

*Please note that some the following uploads will have templates available within the online system. Please login to your account to view the templates and ensure all pop-up blockers are turned off when accessing the templates.*

- vi. **Research Proposal:** Describe the background and rationale. Specifically identify the research questions, objectives and the significance of the project in terms of addressing the priorities in the MS Wellness Survey and providing wellness solutions for people affected by MS. The proposal must clearly explain the reasoning for choosing a specific priority and/or “researcher for a day” MS Wellness Survey question. Please also describe how the outcomes of the research will impact other knowledge-users (i.e. a person living with MS, health practitioner, policy maker, educator, decision maker, community leader, or private sector organization).

**5 pages maximum.**

- vii. **Public Engagement Strategy:** Describe the strategy for engaging people affected by MS. What information will be collected from these individuals? How will they play a collaborative role in aspects of decision-making, study implementation, data interpretation, and moving the results into practice and lifestyle changes? Who in particular would you like to involve in the research (i.e. youth, women, families, etc.). How will you access these individuals and interact with them? How will their involvement impact the research and its outcomes?

**2 pages maximum.**

**viii. Collaboration and Operations Plan**

- For projects that involve collaboration between academic researchers and community innovators, explain how each member of the collaboration will participate in and add value to the proposed project. Describe the administrative and governance structure of the team, including how responsibilities and tasks will be delegated and how decisions will be made. Describe how expenditures and distribution of funds will be monitored, and how resources will be shared, where appropriate.
- For applications submitted by an academic investigator who is not in a collaboration with a community innovator, describe how the goals of the

proposal will be achieved and how community impact can be maximized in the absence of collaboration with a community innovator.

**2 pages maximum.**

**ix. References and supplementary data:** Include references, supplementary tables, figures, charts that are referred to in the Research Proposal.

**No page limit**

**x. Letter of Support:** Provide a signed letter(s) of support from the community or academic partner with which you will be working.

**1 page maximum**

**xi. CV:** Provide the CV of the PA and Co-PAs. The MSSRF endorses the Common CV and requests that all applicants submit a Common CV, the template for which can be found at <https://ccv-cvc.ca/indexresearcher-eng.frm>, please choose MS Society as the agency.

**xii. Required signatures:** The following signatures are required, as per institutional policies (template provided online):

- The PA and Co-PAs
- Head of Department of Institution for PA and each Co-PA, where applicable
- Dean of Faculty or Director of Institution or Director of Organization/Company for PA and each Co-PA, where applicable

**xiii. Appendix:** Upload any additional supporting documents, publications.

**No page limit**

#### **e. Online Application Procedures**

Interested applicants must create a profile on [Easygrants](#) to complete the application process. Templates for required documents can be downloaded from Easygrants, completed and uploaded in their profile. All required components must be fully completed and required documents must be uploaded on Easygrants prior to the due date for the application to be considered. Please ensure that contact information (name of institution, primary address, phone number and e-mail) is accurate and up to date. It is the applicant's responsibility to ensure the submitted application contains all required components. To review the completed application, select "View PDF" on the "Review and Submit" page BEFORE final submission.

You will receive a confirmation e-mail of your submission. If you DO NOT receive this e-mail after submitting your application you MUST contact [msresearchgrants@mssociety.ca](mailto:msresearchgrants@mssociety.ca) as soon as possible.

## REVIEW OF APPLICATIONS

Applications will be reviewed and ranked by a non-conflicted committee comprised of scientific experts, wellness experts, and knowledge users including lay members from the community who are affected by MS, decision makers and policy makers. A Chair will be appointed to lead the review.

For details on the MSSC and MSSRF general review process please visit the [MS Society's Website](#).

### a. Review Criteria

Applications will be evaluated based on both research merit and potential impact, according to the following criteria:

#### Research Merit

- **Significance and relevance:** Will this bring new, relevant knowledge to the field of MS and wellness? Will this address one or more unmet needs and gaps with respect to wellness for people living with MS as identified in the MS Wellness Survey?
- **Innovation:** Does the proposal challenge and seek a shift in current research utilizing novel theoretical concepts, approaches or methodologies, instrumentation, or interventions?
- **Approach:** Are the overall scope, methodology, and analyses appropriate and feasible to accomplish the specific aims of the proposal?
- **Investigator(s):** Do the PA and co-PAs have the necessary experience and expertise as well as appropriate leadership and team structure to carry out the proposed project?
- **Community engagement:** Has the applicant established an appropriate community engagement strategy? Has the applicant defined the collaborative role of people affected by MS in the design and implementation of the project? Will individuals affected by MS be meaningfully integrated into the project? Does the proposal have a well-developed knowledge translation and utilization plan that leverages the capacity of the knowledge users and/or community-based organizations as collaborators?
- **Budget and environment:** Are there adequate resources and support to facilitate the proposed research and is the budget justified?
- **Partnership (if applicable):** Does the partnership between the community innovator and academic investigator add value to the project beyond what would be achievable by each applicant alone? Does the team have an appropriate operational plan with a governance framework and clear delegation of roles and responsibilities?



## Potential Impact

In evaluating the 6 review criteria, is the project likely to exert a sustained, powerful influence on improving wellness and quality of life for people living with MS? Will the findings be applied directly towards informing lifestyle management, tools and technologies, educational resources, and other solutions related to wellness for people living with MS?

### b. Scoring

Chart	Score Range	Potential Impact	Score Range	Scientific Merit
May Be Funded	4.5 - 4.9	Extremely Significant	4.5 - 4.9	Outstanding
	4.0 - 4.4	Very Significant	4.0 - 4.4	Excellent
	3.5 - 3.9	Significant	3.5 - 3.9	Very good
Not Fundable	3.0 - 3.4	Moderate	3.0 - 3.4	Acceptable, but low priority
	2.5 - 2.9	Limited	2.5 - 2.9	Needs revision
	2.0 - 2.4	Very limited	2.0 - 2.4	Needs major revision
	0.0 - 1.9	Negligible	0.0 - 1.9	Seriously flawed

The applicant will need to score 3.5 or above in **both** Research Merit and Potential Impact categories in order to be considered for funding.

### c. Notification and Funding

After the reviews, successful applications will be reviewed by the MSSC's Medical Advisory Committee (MAC) and approved by the MSSRF Board. Upon approval, the successful applicant will be issued a letter of agreement that must be fully executed prior to the release of funds. Applicants who were not selected will also be notified following review.

### d. Timeline

- RFA launch: March 22, 2016
- FAQ teleconference: April 4, 2016 from 15:00 to 16:00 EDT
- Deadline for Pre-Application: May 9, 2016 16:00 EDT
- Notification and Open Full Application: May 24, 2016
- Deadline for Full Application: July 21, 2016 at 16:00 EDT
- Notification of award: October 2016
- Anticipated project start date: November 2016

For any questions or assistance, please contact:

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### **About 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 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.

### **ADDITIONAL RESOURCES FOR APPLICANTS**

- [MS Society Wellness Survey Detailed Results](#)
- [Wellness Research Innovation Grant Terms, Conditions and Policies](#)