

The Alberta MS Collaboration Request for Seed Grant Proposals

The Alberta Multiple Sclerosis Collaboration (Alberta MS Collaboration) is accepting basic science and clinical proposals from new Alberta-based investigators (with a faculty appointment less than 5 years), or experienced Alberta-based investigators new to MS research, for seed multiple sclerosis (MS) research projects focused on **neuroprotection and repair**.

Background and Purpose

The Alberta MS Collaboration is intended to provide societal and economic benefit for the province, accelerate health innovation from bench to bedside, and ultimately improve the lives of Albertans living with MS. This multi-stakeholder initiative supports innovation in MS research and translation in Alberta through industry, government, community and academic partnerships. The Collaboration's goal is to support innovative and transformative research in MS that stimulates discovery in Alberta with a focus on reducing the incidence of MS, elevating knowledge on all aspects of MS, increasing the efficiency and efficacy of treatment and improving quality of life for those living with MS.

The Collaboration's current partners include the Alberta MS Network, Campus Alberta Neuroscience, Alberta Economic Development and Trade, Alberta Health, the MS Society of Canada, and Sanofi Genzyme Canada. Funding for the current **neuroprotection and repair** competition was provided by Alberta Economic Development and Trade and Sanofi Genzyme Canada. Additional funding for the competition will come from the Branch Out Neurological Foundation, for projects aligned with [Branch Out objectives](#). The purpose of the seed grant competition is to increase capacity and impact of MS research by providing support for new investigators (with a faculty appointment less than 5 years), or experienced investigators new to MS research from Alberta universities for basic science to clinical research. The "seed" grant implies that preliminary results are not required, other than the project be based on sound scientific rationale, focused on the area of neuroprotection and repair in MS, and with results that could lead to larger initiatives in MS research.

Current available disease modifying therapies for treating MS target immune modulation; however most patients taking these medications still experience disease progression. More research, from basic science to clinical research that includes clinical trials, is needed to understand and address neurodegeneration and brain repair and to expand non-pharmaceutical treatments and approaches for those with MS. Understanding these processes and translating basic science



knowledge to clinical practice will result in better strategies for preventing the accumulation of axonal loss leading to permanent disability, or for identifying treatments and approaches capable of reversing damage thereby restoring function. Research proposals submitted for this competition should be for new projects and should represent ideas with the potential for significant research or clinical impact in the area of neuroprotection and repair, including non-pharmaceutical interventions.

Eligibility

Any “new” researchers, based in Alberta and holding a full-time, continuing faculty appointment, made in the last five years, may submit a proposal. As well, any researchers based in Alberta who hold a full-time, continuing faculty appointment and whose research has focused on an area other than MS may submit a proposal.

Proposals must be for new projects and include a co-investigator, who is an established researcher in the MS field based in Alberta, who holds a full-time, continuing faculty appointment. The following is a list of appropriate personnel who may be part of an application to the competition:

- **The Principal Investigator (PI):** The PI is listed as the primary grant applicant and is responsible for overseeing the research conducted as part of the proposal. The Request for Proposals (RFP) is open to PIs who have held a faculty appointment at an Alberta institution for five years or less, OR, who whose research focuses on an area other than MS.
- **Co-Investigator:** Any academic or research investigator whose research focuses on MS and who has held a faculty appointment for more than five years is eligible under the policies of their host institution to be considered a PI may be listed as a Co-Investigator. In the case of multiple co-investigators, at least one must have held a faculty appointment for more than five years.
- **Collaborator:** A Collaborator is an individual external to the research team whose role is to provide a specific service to support and advance the proposed research (e.g. access to equipment, training in specialized technique, statistical analysis, etc.). Collaborators do not need to be from an Alberta institution.

In order to be eligible for consideration for Branch Out Neurological Foundation funding, proposals must meet the eligibility requirements for the overall competition and have a focus on non-pharmaceutical treatments and approaches for those with MS. For more information please visit the [Branch Out Neurological Foundation website](#).

Term and Amount

A maximum of four seed projects will be funded at up to \$75,000 CAD total per project (including all direct and indirect costs), for one year. In exceptional



circumstances, recipients may request a one year extension through a review process determined by the Steering Committee. There will be a university overhead charge of 17.5% that will need to be reflected in the indirect costs in all applicants' budgets.

Eligible expenses include the following:

- Salaries of personnel or stipend support for graduate and post-graduate trainees essential to the project.
- Research material and supplies
- Purchase and/or leasing of equipment or services. Amount should not exceed \$5000 per annum without strong justification.

Application and Review Process

Interested applicants must apply online through the MS Society of Canada's Easygrants system. Applications must include:

- a) Title and brief project description:** Provide a project title and a brief project description of the proposed research project. 500 words. Upload into the Easygrants Online Application Form.
- b) Budget:** You may apply for a maximum of 1 year of funding (\$75,000 maximum). Use the Notes sections on the budget form in the Easygrants Online Application to provide details and justification of all budget items.
- c) Detailed scientific research proposal:** Provide a detailed research proposal, describing the background, objectives, hypothesis, scientific questions, study design, and methodology. Describe the relevance of your research project to MS, in particular the area of neuroprotection and repair. Justify how the proposed research possesses unique or novel ideas with significant research or translation impact in the area of neuroprotection and repair in MS. Indicate how the successful PI will work collaboratively with the senior Co-Investigator, as well as other Co-Investigators and Collaborators (see Section e). List scientific milestones and key deliverables that will be achieved during the duration of the grant, also incorporating the budget items. Clearly distinguish any project aims that may extend beyond the duration of the grant term. Maximum 5 pages. Upload into the Easygrants Online Application Form.
- d) References and supplementary data:** Include references, supplementary tables, figures, and charts that are referred to in the scientific research proposal, etc. Maximum 10 pages. Upload into the Easygrants Online Application Form.
- e) Other Personnel:** List the names and institutions for the Co-Investigators, and Collaborators involved on the project. Use the form provided in the Easygrants Online Application.
- f) CV:** Provide the CV of the PI, Co-Investigators, and Collaborators. CVs should use the CIHR Common CV format, the template for which can be found at



<https://ccv-cvc.ca>. Please save your CIHR Common CV to your desktop and upload into the Easygrants Online Application Form.

- g) **Required signatures:** The following signatures are required and must be uploaded into the Easygrants Online Application using the provided form:
- The PI and Co-Investigators
 - Department Head or Chair of PI
 - Dean of Faculty or Director of Institution for PI

Sections **a**, **b**, **e** and **f** will be made available to the Alberta MS Collaboration Steering Committee for informational purposes.

Sections **c** and **d** will only be made available to the review committee and the co-chairs of the Steering Committee.

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 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 email of your submission. If you DO NOT receive this email after submitting your application you MUST contact msresearchgrants@mssociety.ca as soon as possible.

Evaluation of Applications

Applications will be reviewed and ranked by an independent committee of MS experts from institutions outside the province of Alberta. The members of the review committee will be selected by an independent outside of Alberta chair, appointed by the Alberta MS Collaboration Steering Committee co-chairs. The review committee will report its rankings to the Steering Committee for the final determination of the awards.

Members of the Steering Committee are excluded from any decisions involving the scientific ranking of proposals. Also, members of the Steering Committee in a conflict of interest are excluded from non-blinded discussions regarding the funding of the awards. Funding decisions will be based on the review committee rankings, availability of funds, and alignment with the objectives of the Alberta MS Collaboration.

Review Criteria

Applications will be evaluated based on the following criteria:

- **Significance:** Will this bring new, relevant knowledge to the field and enhance understanding of MS in the area of neuroprotection and repair?
- **Investigators:** Do the lead PI and Co-Investigators meet the eligibility criteria and have the necessary experience and expertise, as well as the appropriate leadership and team structure to carry out the proposed research?
- **Approach:** Are the overall scope, methodology, and analyses appropriate and feasible to accomplish the specific aims of the study?
- **Environment:** Are there adequate resources and support to facilitate the proposed research and is the budget justified?
- **Future initiatives:** Will this proposal provide results and directions that can lead to a larger grant proposal to other agencies such as CIHR or the MS Society of Canada? Has the applicants laid out a plan on how they will use the results generated from the seed grant to apply for bigger grants?
- **Branch Out Foundation:** Please see the [Branch Out Neurological Foundation](#) for the specific criteria used to identify proposals.

Timeline

In anticipation of the funding commitments being fulfilled, the following is the timeline for the competition:

- RFP launch: November 30, 2016
- Deadline for applications: January 31, 2017
- Anticipated notification of decisions: April 14, 2017

Acknowledgement

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Support

For any questions or assistance, please contact:

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