

INTERNATIONAL PROGRESSIVE MS ALLIANCE

CONNECT TO END PROGRESSIVE MS

FUNDING ANNOUNCEMENT REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS

1. CHALLENGES IN PROGRESSIVE MS AWARDS
2. INFRASTRUCTURE AWARDS FOR PROGRESSIVE MS RESEARCH



The Progressive MS Alliance (Alliance) is pleased to announce two new funding initiatives designed to accelerate research focused on progressive MS. The Alliance anticipates that these awards will be the first in a focused strategy to expedite development of therapies for progressive MS.

WHAT IS THE ALLIANCE?

The Progressive MS Alliance, initially established as the International Progressive MS Collaborative, is working together to connect resources and experts around the world to find the answers and develop the solutions to end progressive MS. The Progressive MS Alliance is an ever-expanding alliance of organizations from around the world, with current managing members including the Multiple Sclerosis International Federation, the MS Society (UK), the National Multiple Sclerosis Society (USA), and the Italian Multiple Sclerosis Society. We will accomplish this mission by employing research strategies that connect partners across multiple scientific disciplines and that fund innovative and collaborative research world-wide. As a result, we will accelerate the knowledge and collaboration needed to identify solutions for people affected by progressive MS.

By establishing global research priorities and working together to build upon current efforts with shared knowledge and focused resources, the potential to succeed is greater than ever before. The Alliance is now soliciting proposals from the global MS research community using a variety of funding models. These solicitations address priority research areas identified by the Alliance.

PROGRESSIVE MS ALLIANCE MANAGING MEMBERS



OVERALL GOALS FOR THIS REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS (RFA)

The Alliance has identified a number of key areas of significant unmet need that must be overcome before new treatments for progressive MS can be developed.

(Reference: "Setting a research agenda for progressive multiple sclerosis: The international collaborative on progressive MS". Multiple Sclerosis Journal 2012 Nov; 18(11):1534-40).

The goal of this first RFA is to encourage scientific innovation in the areas that have been identified; to promote collaboration; and, to begin the process of building an infrastructure (databases, collaborative tools, etc.) to enable data sharing. It is anticipated that these initiatives will lead to larger collaborative efforts which will be developed and announced in the near future.

A. CHALLENGE AWARDS – are designed to encourage and nurture scientific innovation in the following focus areas:

1. Phenotype/Genotype and pathophysiological mechanisms of progressive MS

- a. Innovative strategies to identify new targets for repurposing or rescue of approved or abandoned therapeutics
- b. New approaches for the identification of treatable phenotypes
- c. Validation of new routes of administration (CNS delivery, gene-therapy, etc.)

2. Development of new and existing pre-clinical models for progressive disease based on community consensus building

- a. Identify experimental models of progressive disease targeting putative and novel pathogenic mechanisms occurring in progressive forms of MS (e.g. mitochondrial dysfunction, microglial activation, etc.)
- b. If appropriate, explore models from other neurodegenerative diseases, such as Alzheimer's and Parkinson's disease

3. Discovery and validation of proof of concept biomarkers (body fluid, imaging, neurophysiological)

4. Innovative designs for proof of concept trials of therapeutic agents or therapeutic strategies (e.g. rehabilitation, etc.)

B. INFRASTRUCTURE AWARDS – are designed to promote and enhance data sharing and knowledge management, and encourage collaboration among researchers

1. Developing enabling technologies and infrastructure for data sharing to support one or more Alliance priority research areas (e.g. pooled database for models/target validation, knowledge infrastructure for repurposing, etc.)

Support for each of these awards is limited to a maximum of €75,000 in total cost for 12 months.

This RFA is open to all international researchers in academic and other non-profit organizations, as well as to researchers in commercial organizations.

It is anticipated that as many as 15 grants may be awarded through this RFA. **Awards will be contingent on the availability of funds and the receipt of a sufficient number of meritorious applications in one or more of the areas identified.**

TIMELINE

September 18, 2013	RFA Release
October 29, 2013	Informational call for Applicants
November 12, 2013	Informational call for Applicants
January 15, 2014	Pre-applications Due (by 23:59 Eastern Standard Time)
January 31, 2014	Applications Due (by 23:59 Eastern Standard Time)
May, 2014	Announcement of Funding Decisions
July, 2014	Anticipated Start of Funding

ELIGIBILITY

Principal Investigator: It is expected that the person designated as the principal investigator (PI) for this funding program is a scientist focused on basic, clinical or rehabilitation research that is considered eligible by his or her institution to apply for a research grant.

Organization: Organizations are the official recipients of grants and may be in any country and either a non-profit organization based at an academic institution or commercial organization (e.g. pharmaceutical and biotechnology companies) with a medical research focus and mission. **Proposals from commercial organizations must incorporate cross-sector collaboration (i.e. academic-industry collaboration) as part of the research plan.**

CONDITIONS

Awarded projects will be administered by the Alliance and will be subject to the Alliance's policies and procedures for funding programs. Support for proposals submitted in response to this RFA is limited to a maximum of €75,000 in total costs for a period of 12 months. Purchase of major items of equipment and use of funds for travel will not be permitted. The applying organization may request an amount for indirect costs up to 10% of the direct costs requested by the PI provided that the direct and indirect costs do not exceed a total of €75,000. **Proposals from commercial organizations may not include an amount for indirect costs.**

The proposal should include a project timeline. The organization will be required to provide research progress reports and financial expenditure reports to the Alliance every 6 months. A final written report of the work accomplished and an accounting of expenditures will be required within 30 days after the project ends. The grantee organization will also be required to comply with the Alliance's invention policy and other Alliance policies and procedures.

PREPARATION OF APPLICATION - SUBMISSION

The Alliance will use the National MS Society's (USA) application interface for this RFA. All applications must be submitted in English. The Society employs a Web-based utility for the submission of grant applications. Investigators must first register with the online application site (www.mssocietyapplyonline.org) and complete a one or two paragraph, online pre-application. Pre-applications will be reviewed by the Alliance scientific staff team, within 5 business days of receipt to determine; a) whether the research plan is appropriate and aligned with this RFA; and b) whether the PI meets the eligibility criteria. Grant applications can be submitted only after the applying investigator receives approval of the pre-application. Questions regarding alignment and eligibility can be addressed to the contacts listed at the end of this RFA.

The final application should be concise, with the Research Proposal Narrative strictly limited to three (3) pages. The application should consist of:

- a. **Research Proposal Narrative.** Provide a concise description of the research proposal not exceeding 3 single-spaced pages. 12 point font size must be used.
- b. **Statement of Expected Outcomes and Deliverables:** As part of the Research Proposal Narrative, describe in 200 words or less the results and deliverables you expect, the importance of your research proposal to progressive MS, and the relevance to the mission of the Alliance and to the goals outlined in this RFA.
- b. **Work Plan and Timeline.** Provide a concise list of steps, outcomes, deliverables and milestones, not exceeding 2 single-spaced pages.

c. **Budget and Budget Justification.** Details and justification of all budget items relative to the proposed research should be provided. Applicants may request funds for a maximum of 12 months of support, not exceeding €75,000 in direct and indirect costs. The budget is part of the Research Proposal section that is uploaded from the [Apply Online](#) site. Investigators may request the funds in the following categories: salaries for personnel, patient costs, consumable supplies, other expenditures, and indirect costs. Applicants should highlight any potential to leverage funding from other sources in their budget request.

d. **Biographical Sketches.** Brief 1-2 page biosketch of the PI and key co-investigators must be included. This should include a summary list of relevant publications.

REVIEW

The review will be conducted by special panels convened by the Alliance. The review criteria for the application include:

- o Adherence to the specific objective of the RFA and alignment and relevance to the mission and goals of the Alliance
- o Importance of research contribution to address knowledge gaps in progressive MS
- o Scientific potential and scientific critique of the proposed work plan
- o Resources requested: are the funds requested essential for the work, and do the importance and scientific potential justify funding on the scale requested?
- o Novelty and innovation (for Challenge awards)
- o Expertise of the investigators
- o Appropriateness of the resources and environment

SUBSEQUENT FUNDING

The Alliance anticipates additional funds (up to €500,000 per project) could be available to support multi-year projects to those applicants that have shown exceptional productivity and promise for making important contributions to translating discoveries into treatments for progressive MS during the first phase of this RFA.

CONTACT INFORMATION

ITALIAN MS SOCIETY

Name: Paola Zaratin, Ph.D.

Title: Director of Scientific Research

Email: paola.zaratin@aism.it

Tel: +39 010 271 3410

MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION

Name: Dr. Dhia Chandraratna

Title: Head of Scientific and Medical Research

Email: Dhia@msif.org

Tel: +44 (0) 20 7620 1911

NATIONAL MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS SOCIETY

Name: Bruce Bebo, Ph.D.

Title: Associate VP, Discovery Research

Email: Bruce.Bebo@nmss.org

Tel: 212.476.0477

MS SOCIETY OF CANADA

Name: Karen Lee, Ph.D.

Title: Vice President, Research
Managing Director, endMS Research and Training Network

Email: karen.lee@mssociety.ca

Tel: 416-967-3024

UK MS SOCIETY

Name: Dr. Susan Kolhaas

Title: Head of Biomedical Research

Email: research@mssociety.org.uk

Tel: +44 (0)20 8438 0700