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Honorary Scientific Research Committee
Professor John Pollard AO (Chair)
Professor Peter Russell
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Professor Graeme Stewart AM
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Trish MS Research Foundation Funding Process Description

1. Expressions of Interest

The Trish Multiple Sclerosis Research Foundation is calling for Expressions of Interest for Translational Research commencing 2025.

The Foundation's honorary Scientific Research Committee will consider Expressions of Interest for two Translational Research Projects totalling \$150,000 each, over a two year period. These Translational Research Project Grants are particularly suited to early career researchers.

The Translational Research Project Grants will be awarded to Australian researchers undertaking high-quality translational MS research which demonstrates clear evidence of translational research capacity and is aimed to address the unmet needs of people living with Progressive MS.

Applicants who wish to submit an Expression of Interest for a Trish MS Research Foundation Translational Research Project Grant should download the Expression of Interest Form from the Trish MS Research Foundation's website <https://trishmsresearch.org.au/msresearch/available-funding/> and once completed, submit their Expression of Interest to info@trishmsresearch.org.au. The deadline for submission of Expressions of Interest is 15th March 2024.

The Foundation will acknowledge receipt of every EOI. This will be by email within two days of receipt. If Acknowledgement of Receipt of the EOI is not received please follow up with a 'Request for Confirmation of Receipt of EOI'. The Foundation's EOI Acknowledgement of Receipt will include an Application Number which should be used on all future correspondence.

The Expressions of Interest will be assessed and evaluated by the Foundation's honorary Scientific Research Committee and researchers submitting the best Expressions of Interest will be notified and invited to complete and submit an Application Form. Researchers submitting unsuccessful Expressions of Interest will also be notified.

This document explains the Trish MS Research Foundation's process for assessing and allocating funding for applicants.

The Grant type is specifically a Translational Research Project Grant, the Selection Criteria for which is:



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1. Applications must be aligned with the funding principles of the Trish MS Research Foundation.
2. Applications will need to include at least one collaborator with a strong track record in MS research and/or the clinical management of MS, and the collaborative team will need to demonstrate the required multi-disciplinary expertise to complete all elements of the study.
3. Applications involving commercial partners, where relevant, are encouraged.
4. Applications involving investigators from other disease fields are encouraged.
5. Your Translational Research Project Grant must demonstrate direct relevance for the prevention and/or reversal of disability in MS and be aimed to address the unmet needs of people living with Progressive MS. Applications solely addressing the control/suppression of inflammatory relapses in MS will not be considered.
6. Applications must demonstrate a clear, feasible pathway for clinical implementation.

2. Overview of the Process

The Roles and Responsibilities of the Trish MS Research Foundation's honorary Scientific Research Committee

The Trish MS Research Foundation's honorary Scientific Research Committee is a voluntary body of experts who review and assess applications received for funding based on merit and meeting the stringent guidelines of the Foundation of finding a cure or preventive strategy for multiple sclerosis, as well as meeting the specific requirements of the Translational Research Project Grant.

The Foundation's honorary Scientific Research Committee is responsible for the final decisions. The members of the Foundation's honorary Scientific Research Committee are listed above.

Applications are reviewed by External Assessors

When the Trish MS Research Foundation receives an application it is sent for independent assessment, comments and critique by External Assessors. External Assessors are qualified National and/or International experts in the discipline and field relevant to the application. They provide comment on the relevance to MS and alignment to the selection criteria, significance, value and novelty of the hypothesis, strengths and weaknesses, strength of preliminary data and feasibility of the application, as well as the track record of the applicant and their team – see review criteria below. External Assessors may also make confidential comments on the application for the Foundation's honorary Scientific Research Committee, which are not included in the rebuttal process described below.

Application Response Opportunity

When external assessments are returned, the Assessors' names and ratings are removed before it is sent to the applicant for a response/rebuttal.

The applicant is invited to respond with additional information or comments as appropriate within seven business days or as advised. This ensures that the applicant has an opportunity to provide clarification to the Foundation's honorary Scientific Research Committee to assist the assessment process and ensure fairness. The applicant's response is not sent back to the External Assessor but is provided to the honorary Scientific Research Committee.



3.

Review of Applications by honorary Scientific Research Committee

The Foundation's honorary Scientific Research Committee will meet in October or November each year to review and debate the applications.

The Chair of the honorary Scientific Research Committee appoints a Lead Reviewer for each application. The Lead Reviewer will read and critique the application in detail and will guide and lead the discussion during the meeting for that application, summarising the comments/critique from the External Assessors and the Rebuttal, presenting their own assessment of the application including an overall rating. The application is then discussed by the honorary Scientific Research Committee.

Following discussion, honorary Scientific Research Committee members are asked to indicate if they intend to vote 2 or more points either more or less, than the Lead Reviewer's rating and their reasons. These reasons are then discussed, following which each honorary Scientific Research Committee member will vote on the application.

An honorary Scientific Research Committee member who has an association or conflict-of-interest with the applicant/application is asked to declare this and will refrain from assessing/voting on the application.

Funding Each Year

The honorary Scientific Research Committee determines which applications will be funded and a funding amount for the application/s. The final decision is based on a balance between meritorious applications and available funding.

The Assessment Criteria

Criteria used by external reviewers and the Foundation's honorary Scientific Research Committee to assess applications

1. Relevance of this research to multiple sclerosis and alignment to the selection criteria.
2. Significance, value and novelty of the hypothesis to be tested, including the appropriateness and feasibility of the research method and the strengths and weaknesses.
3. Strength of preliminary data.
4. Likelihood of completion of the project within the given time frame.
5. Recent research track record and productivity of the applicant and team.
6. If the application IS fundable, are there ways the research could be improved?
7. If the project is NOT fundable, what specific improvements are required to make it fundable?
8. Overall rating of the science and overall comments on the application.
9. Is the requested Budget reasonable?
10. Assessor's recommendation whether to fund the application in its current form.

Communicating the outcome

The Trish MS Research Foundation formally advises the applicant and the administering institutions of the outcome by email.



4.

The Responsibilities of a successful Applicant and Administering Institution

The successful applicant and the administering institution are advised of the payment cycle and conditions of Trish MS Research Foundation funding. They are asked to sign the Letter of Acceptance, which acknowledges their award and specifies timing for receipt of progress reports and timing to invoice the Trish MS Research Foundation for funding.

If the level of grant-in-aid funding necessitates a slight change in scope of the research project, this must be noted and approved in the returned Letter of Acceptance.

Clearances

Before any funds are paid all required clearances outlined in the application form must be satisfied – ethics approvals, residency requirements, etc.

Reporting

Successful applicants are required to report on their progress every 12 months. The reporting dates will be detailed in the Letter of Acceptance.