



**National
Multiple Sclerosis
Society**

Instructions for Submission: Postdoctoral Fellowships

National Multiple Sclerosis Society

Please read these instructions and follow them carefully. The application process itself consists of two parts, a short pre-application and the full application.

The grants management system called **MSGrants** has been implemented for preparation and submission of research proposals to the Society. MSGrants can be found at <https://nms.fluxx.io>

Please note:

- Compatible browsers include **Chrome, Firefox, and Safari**. Internet Explorer and Microsoft Edge are **not** fully compatible and should be avoided. Check with your IT department for information on installing one of these browsers if you do not already have one.
- Passwords for accessing the site never expire and a new password will not be needed for each cycle.
- Submission of proposals is exclusively electronic for **all** parts of the proposal, including institutional approval and appendix materials, and no paper copies of any part of the proposal will be accepted by the Society.

Details concerning the grants management system and application process can be found in these instructions and on the MSGrants website itself. Details concerning the content for your application can be found in proposal guidelines specific to each funding opportunity, also available on the MSGrants website.

Applications that are incomplete, exceed the page limitations, and applications that use undersize or condensed type **will not be considered for funding by the Society.** The full application, including electronic institutional approval, must be submitted before the deadline.

1. GETTING STARTED

1.1. Registration

If you have not previously submitted a proposal to the National Multiple Sclerosis Society, then you will need to register and be approved for access to MSGrants. Go to <https://nmss.fluxx.io> and once you are at the login page, click on **Register Now**. Complete the online registration form and submit your registration by clicking on the words **Submit Request**. This will submit your request for access to the site to the Research Programs staff of the Society. The staff will review your registration information to verify that you are qualified to apply for funding from the Society. If approved, you will receive an automated e-mail message containing your login credentials within *two business days*.

1.2. Password Reset

If you need to reset your password, please click on **Reset or Create Password** on the main login page for MSGrants or go to https://nmss.fluxx.io/forgot_password. At the next screen, enter the e-mail address that you used to register and click on **Submit**. The system will send you an e-mail with a link to reset your password. If the system does not recognize your e-mail address, you may need to register as if you are a new user.

Your password should contain at least one of each of the following:

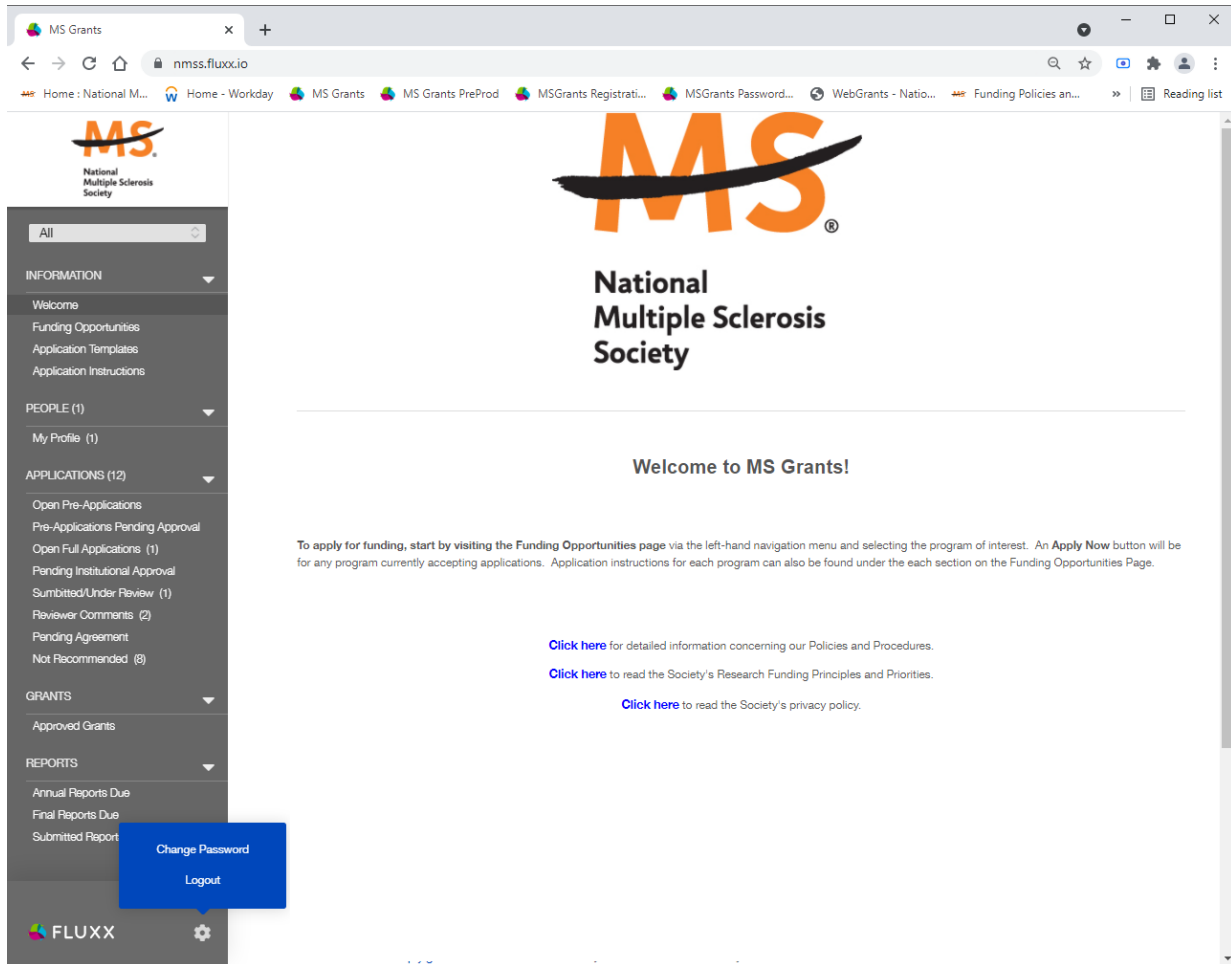
- Uppercase letter (A through Z)
- Lowercase letter (a through z)
- Number (0 through 9)

1.3. A Word about Passwords

It is important that you not share your password. Your password is linked directly to your account as a Principal Investigator and will provide access to all information used in your submissions to the National Multiple Sclerosis Society. When logged in, you will be able to use MSGrants for a variety of purposes in addition to preparation and submission of proposals, such as submission of your progress reports. Your password for MSGrants never expires and you will not need to obtain a new password to apply for other funding programs or subsequent cycles.

2. NAVIGATING MSGrants

When you log on you will see the grantee portal (illustrated below). A description of the main parts of the grantee portal, accessed through the left-hand navigation menu, follows.



2.1. Information

Funding Opportunities—The funding opportunities that are currently available and the application deadlines. Click on **Apply Now** to start a pre-application.

Application Templates—Various documents available for download that you may need/use in preparing your application. These include the following:

- Templates for preparing specific funding opportunity narratives
- A Word template for preparing biographical sketches
- An example of a plain language summary
- A PDF file showing the keywords that you will also find in a dropdown list on applicable applications. This PDF file is provided to make it easier for you to see the entire list before making your selections.

Application Instructions—Instructions for all current funding opportunities

2.2. Users

My Profile—Your individual user profile information is outlined in this section. Please make sure

all contact information is current and edit this information to update your profile.

2.3. Applications

As your application moves through the various steps in the system, it will be listed under different sections of the grantee portal.

Open Pre-Applications—All pre-applications that have been started AND saved, but not yet submitted. These pre-applications can be edited.

Pre-Applications Pending Approval—Pre-applications that have been submitted for initial review by the Society are found in this section. These pre-applications cannot be edited.

Open Full Applications—Approved pre-applications become full applications and can be accessed in this section. Full applications can be edited and saved for continued revision later.

Pending Institutional Approval—Full applications have been submitted and are pending institutional approval can be found here. Applications in this section cannot be edited by anyone other than the Institutional Signatory identified in the application.

Submitted/Under Review—Applications that have been submitted can be found here. These applications will be screened by Society staff and advanced through the peer review process; applications in this section cannot be edited.

Pending Agreement—Applications that have been approved for funding, but which still require some additional processing and/or submission of documents can be found here.

Not Recommend—Applications that have previously been reviewed but were not recommended for funding are found here.

2.4. Grants

Approved Grants—Active grants (applications that have been approved for funding and which require no further processing) can be found here.

2.5. Reports

Annual Reports Due—All annual reports scheduled for multi-year grants can be found here. Reports in this section can be edited and saved for continued revision later.

Final Reports Due—All final reports for grants can be found here. Reports in this section can be edited and saved for continued revision later.

Submitted Reports—All reports submitted to Society staff can be found in this section. These reports cannot be edited.

3. THE PRE-APPLICATION

For each funding opportunity, there is a pre-application that must be completed and submitted to the Society before the applicant can prepare a full application. The pre-application is reviewed by a member of the staff to determine that 1) the applicant and organization are eligible to receive funding and 2) the research idea is consistent with the Society's mission and [Pathways to Cures Roadmap](#) and the nature of the specific funding opportunity.

*****Please Note:** In order to make sure that all components of the final application, including institutional approval can be completed by the final deadline, the Society has enacted a deadline for pre-applications. The pre-application must be submitted **1 week prior to the deadline.**

3.1. How to Complete the Pre-Application

Once you are logged in, click on **Funding Opportunities** to see a list of funding opportunities, along with information on which opportunities are currently open and the application deadlines. Find the opportunity of interest and click on **Apply Now** to open the pre-application form.

- **Eligibility Quiz:** The Eligibility quiz will establish whether you are eligible to apply for that funding opportunity, as outlined above. If you pass the eligibility criteria, the rest of the pre-application will open, and you can complete this step. If you fail one or more of the eligibility criteria, you will not be able to prepare and submit a pre-application for this program.
- **Organization:** The **Organization** field will be pre-populated with the organization identified in your profile. This should be the organization where you will complete your fellowship. If you will complete your fellowship at a different organization than is currently linked to your MSGrants account, please contact the Society to change your affiliation.
- **Principal Investigator:** In the **Principal Investigator** field, select your name from the drop-down list.
- **Institutional Signatory:** This is the individual who “signs off” on the application on behalf of your institution, meaning they have the legal authority to act and speak for the institution and are authorized to act on behalf of the institution and to assume the obligations. The Signatory will be responsible for authorizing the application in MSGrants to complete the application submission. If you do not know who this is, leave it blank, and you will be able to edit or input the correct information before you submit your full application.
- **Title:** Enter a title for your pre-application (this can be changed later in the full application).
- **Summary:** In the **Brief Summary of Research Idea** text box, insert a brief (500 words or less) description of your proposed project.
- **Project Zip Code:** In the **Project Zip Code** field enter the zip code where the work will be done. If more than one site is going to be used, this should be the Zip code of the primary or lead site.
- **Amount Requested:** In the **Estimate of Amount Requested** field, enter your best estimate of the total cost of your proposal. This figure will not be used to evaluate whether to approve your pre-application and you will be able to change this figure in the full application.
- **Mentor Information:** Enter your Mentor and Co-Mentor (if applicable) name and information for your proposed fellowship.

- **Biosketch Upload:** Upload a Biosketch for you and your mentor as PDF documents.

Once you have completed all sections of the pre-application, click on **Save** to save your work. At this point you can log out and return later to revise your pre-application by pressing the **Edit** button, or you can click on **Submit** to submit your pre-application to Society staff for approval. Saving your application does not send it to Society staff. You must click on **Submit** for it to be considered for approval. Once you press **Submit**, you will no longer be able to make changes, though you will still be able to see your pre-application.

When you submit the pre-application, it will automatically be sent to the appropriate program officer at the Society for review.

3.2. Notification of pre-application approval

Once the pre-application is approved, usually within two business days, you will receive an automated message from MSGrants and will be able to begin preparation of the full application. In some cases, Society staff may send the pre-application back to you for clarification or changes before final approval.

4. THE FULL APPLICATION

Once your pre-application has been approved you can log in and begin to prepare the full application. In the grantee portal, click on the **Open Applications** link and then on **Edit** to begin working on the full application. You can work on the various parts of your full application in any order, save your work, and return later to continue working as many times as you want, but all sections must be completed before you submit.

4.1. Navigation Tips

Editing—Any time before you submit your proposal, you can click on the edit button in the **upper right corner** to open your proposal for further editing.

Save your work—It is a good idea to save as you complete each part of the application. This button is located at the **bottom** of the application when in edit mode.

Expanding sections—Black triangles ► indicate the sections of the application that will expand to open when you click on the triangle. The default of the application is for each section to be collapsed so only section headers are visible. You should open each section and complete all the required components in the section. Clicking the triangle again re-minimizes that section.

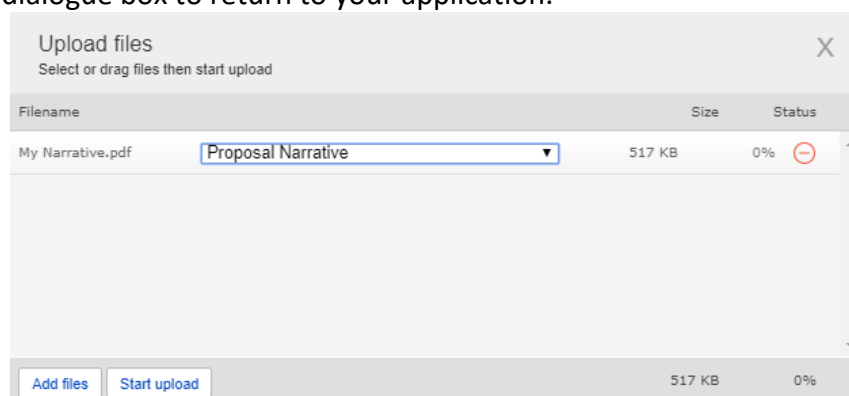
Types of input—The section components can either be drop-down lists, text boxes, or sections where you need to upload one or more files.

Uploading documents—Sections that require one or more files to be uploaded will have a

document component, as shown below.



Click on the blue plus sign to open the upload dialogue box. Click on **Add Files** to browse for the file that you want to upload. Click on the dropdown menu to indicate the type of document you are uploading (ex. Biosketch or Proposal Narrative). Click on **Start Upload** to upload the file and exit out of the dialogue box to return to your application.



To change the document type or delete the file that you uploaded, position your cursor anywhere to the right of the name of the file and click on the pencil (edit) or the minus sign (delete) that appear.

Please note, any charts, diagrams and figures **MUST** be submitted as a PDF attachment.

Printing—You can click on the print button in the **upper right corner** (🖨️) to generate a PDF file of your application. This will not include the files attached.

Submitting—When you have completed your application, you can use the submit button located at the **bottom right** of the application after you have saved and exited edit mode to advance it to the next stage.

Withdrawing an application—If you do not wish to submit your proposal or continue working on it, you can use the withdraw button in the **bottom right**. Once you withdraw an application, it will not be considered for funding. This option is generally used when an investigator has inadvertently started a duplicate application or decided not to submit an application that has already been started.

4.2. **Required Fields**

This section is a list of required fields for the application. There is no action to take within this section, it is simply a reminder for the application of the fields that must be completed before the application can be submitted.

4.3. Project Information

This section includes basic information about the proposed project. To assist you in selecting the **Keywords** that are a required part of this section, a list of available keywords can be downloaded from the Grantee Home Page.

Note on resubmissions: for fellowship programs, an application is considered a resubmission if the applicant has applied to the same program previously, regardless of whether the research project described has changed.

4.4. Institution Officials

This section will be pre-populated from your pre-application, but you should confirm that the Principal Investigator and Institutional Signatory information is correct.

The **Principal Investigator** should be the applicant. The individual selected in this field will receive all communications for this application.

The **Institutional Signatory** is the institutional official who has the legal authority to act and speak for the institution and is authorized to act on behalf of the institution and to assume the obligations. The Signatory will be responsible for authorizing the application in MSGrants to complete the application submission. This individual is required to have a MS Grants account, and complete authorization of the application online. If the Signatory is not registered, this individual must go to the MSGrants log on page <https://nmss.fluxx.io> and register before they will appear in the dropdown list to be added to the application. Neither the Principal Investigator nor Mentor may serve as the institutional signatory; if you do not know who the institutional signatory should be then please work with your mentor and organization to identify the correct individual.

In this section you will also confirm the location of the organization, the name of the principal investigator, and the information for your organization Financial Officer. This information will be used if your application is awarded.

4.5. Mentor Information

This section asks for information about your mentor and co-mentor (if applicable). If you are currently at a different institution from your mentor, your mentor's institution should be sponsoring and signing off on the fellowship application.

4.6. Mentor's Training Experience

Enter the information requested about your mentor's predoctoral and postdoctoral trainees from the past 5 years.

4.7. Biographical Sketches

All key personnel should be listed, including the principal investigator (applicant), mentor, and anyone else substantially involved in your fellowship. This will assist the Society in more effectively tracking all the researchers and clinicians who participate in Society-funded projects.

An NIH style biosketch is required for all key personnel. A template is available for download on the Application Templates section if needed. All biographical sketches must be uploaded in PDF format and labeled as “Biosketch.” Any biosketches that were uploaded with the pre-application will appear in this section of the application and do not need to be uploaded again.

4.8. Plain Language Description of Proposed Project

The plain language description should describe your proposed research in language suitable for a news release to the lay public. This is important information for the society, and we please ask that applicants do not repurpose a scientific abstract for the plain language description. The plain language description is broken into several sections. In each section you are required to address a different element of your proposed project. Please read these instructions carefully and ensure that you address each element. Applicants are advised to utilize the many resources the Society had provided on how to write a successful Plain Language Description [found here](#) (.pdf). If your project is funded, Society staff may make editorial changes to the summary to enhance its clarity.

4.9. Scientific Summary of Proposed Project

This is equivalent to a scientific abstract, and this summary should capture in condensed form the rationale, specific aims, methods, anticipated outcomes, and how the proposed research addresses the National MS Society’s [Pathways to Cures Roadmap](#).

4.10. Proposal Narrative

The proposal narrative is the heart of the application. Details concerning the preparation of the proposal narrative appear below. A template in Microsoft Word format is available for download on the Application Templates page of MSGrants. This template parallels NIH format. Follow the instructions in the proposal narrative form itself. Sections include:

- pending applications,
- career plans,
- training plan,
- relevance to the National MS Society’s [Pathways to Cures Roadmap](#),
- research plan, and
- literature cited.

Specifications for the proposal narrative are 3 single-spaced pages (including figures but not references), 11 point or larger font, and half-inch margins on all sides.

If this is a **resubmitted application**, an introduction of no more than half a page is required to precede your proposal narrative to briefly summarize the changes made in response to the criticisms and issues raised by the reviewers of your previous application. This ½ page introduction does not count towards the 3-page limit for the narrative.

Once the narrative is completed, it must be converted to PDF format and uploaded in this section and label it “Proposal Narrative” from the dropdown menu.

4.11. Human Subjects and/or Vertebrate Animals

This section includes information on protection of human subjects and animals. If any documents concerning these assurances need to be included, such as Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval memos, they must be uploaded in PDF format as part of the application.

IRB Approval File (if applicable)—If your proposed research involves human subjects, you must provide a signed and dated approval letter from the IRB or equivalent appropriate committee of your institution. If approval is pending, indicate that the project has been submitted to the committee for review in the Human Subjects section. Payment for approved grants will not begin until a signed and dated approval is received, reviewed and approved by the Society.

Institutional Animal Care File (if applicable)—For research involving animals, it is the obligation of the Principal Investigator to provide written approval from the applicants (or subcontractor’s) Institutional Animal Use and Care Committee (IACUC) or equivalent international accreditation committee. If approval has been granted, a copy of the signed and dated approval letter must be submitted. If approval is pending, indicate that the project has been submitted to the committee for review in the Vertebrate Animals section. This approval must be received by the Society prior to the release of any funds specifically related to the part of the Project that requires this kind of approval, and a copy of the approval must be received by the Society on an annual basis during the funding term of the Award.

All biomedical research which involves the use of animals must adhere to the laws and guidelines for use of animals in scientific experimentation imposed by the country in which the experiments are conducted.

4.12. Other Support

The Society requires detailed information concerning current and pending support for personnel listed on the application. This information is useful in evaluating any potential overlap with the current application and in identifying potential conflicts of interest. This should be uploaded as a single PDF document using the template provided and labeled as “Other Document.”

4.13. Budget

Budget items must be entered for each fellowship year. Salaries for each year must be requested in accordance with specific Society postdoctoral fellowship salary scales (See our [website](#) for the

current scale). For applicants with residency experience, each full year of residency training should be counted as the equivalent of a year of postdoctoral training.

The institutional allowance is fixed at \$7,850 per year. Additional fringe benefits may not be added to the request.

Relocation costs may be requested for the first year. Funds to cover the cost of travel to the training institution are available but only for the fellow and not for family members or for transportation of household belongings. The amount will be sufficient to cover economy class transportation by air or equivalent.

4.14. Mentor Letter

A letter of support from your mentor is required. Upload this as PDF and label the file “Letters.” The mentor letter must address the following:

- Recommended duration of fellowship.
- The salary and other costs recommended for each year of the award and the use of departmental and/or institutional funds to supplement salary and/or tuition costs.
- The amount requested for relocation costs.
- A meaningful description of the proposed program of research training with an indication of the percentage of the fellow’s time to be devoted to research, coursework, teaching, clinical duties (if appropriate), and any other activities.
- An evaluation of the likelihood that the fellow will make a meaningful contribution to multiple sclerosis as an independent investigator after the fellowship training.
- A brief description of the ongoing activities in the laboratory, especially as they relate to the proposed program of training for the applicant.

4.15. Reference Letters

Enter information for 3 individuals that you would like to submit letters of reference on your behalf. These are in addition to the mentor letter requested above; the mentor **cannot** be counted as a reference.

Tips:

- The MSGrants system will send automatic e-mail notification to these individuals with information on how they can submit a reference letter in support of your application. This email is generated immediately and cannot be unsent, so please confirm the email address before it is added to your application. Additionally, it is recommended that you contact your references ahead of time so that they will expect this e-mail request.
- You will receive an automatic confirmation email when a reference letter is submitted for your application. Additionally, you will be able to confirm that letters have been uploaded by your references by checking the status in the reference letter section of your application, although you will not be able to view the letters.
- References should be carefully selected. Only those individuals who can make meaningful comments about your qualifications should be selected. They may include your doctoral

advisor, the chairperson of your department, or scientific collaborators.

- Request references only from individuals who will be able to submit them in time for submission of the application. All reference letters are due at the application deadline—no exceptions. Letters can be uploaded after your application has been submitted but must be received before the deadline. It is advisable to consult with your references well in advance, so that their letters and forms are received by the application deadline.

4.16. Letters Submitted with Application

This is the section where other letters submitted with your application are uploaded, such as letters of collaboration or support from any individuals whose cooperation is necessary for the proposed research. Letters must be converted to PDF format and should be combined and uploaded as a single PDF file and labeled as “Letters.”

4.17. Materials Submitted

This is the section where appendix materials submitted with your application are uploaded. Examples of common appendix materials are listed below. Appendix materials must be in PDF format and can be uploaded either as a combined file or as multiple PDF files and should be labeled “Materials.” Do not use this section to circumvent the page limits of the narrative section; putting information here that belongs in the narrative may result in a more negative assessment by the peer review panel.

Items commonly included in the appendix are:

- **Publications:** A maximum of 3 reprints or preprints can be included as part of the appendix.
- **Clinical Trial Protocols:** In some cases, a proposal submitted to the Society may involve a study that is an add-on to a clinical trial that has been funded by another agency. Although the clinical trial itself is not the focus of the proposal, it is essential for the peer-review panel to have detailed information about the trial. If the above scenario describes your proposal, you must include a copy of the clinical trial protocol as part of the appendix.
- **Questionnaires and assessments:** If your proposed study utilizes questionnaires or other types of printed assessment instruments, you may want to include these as part of the appendix.
- **Other Materials:** Many other types of materials could potentially be included in the appendix. However, keep in mind that reviewers have a great deal of material to review and so you should choose your appended materials carefully.

4.18. Applicant Demographics

The Society is requesting this information to be used for internal purposes only, specifically to help inform the Society’s Diversity, Equity, and Inclusivity initiatives (please see our Cultural Values and Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Statement online [here](#)). Your responses will be confidential and will not affect consideration of your application.

5. DUAL SUBMISSION TO OTHER AGENCIES

You are encouraged to apply to other appropriate agencies, in addition to the National Multiple Sclerosis Society. If you apply to another agency for support of the same or similar project, be sure to acknowledge the application(s) in the **Other Support** section and where it is indicated on the **Project Information** section of your proposal.

6. SUBMISSION OF YOUR PROPOSAL

Once you are satisfied with your proposal and all sections are marked as complete, you can click on the **Submit** button, available at the bottom right of the application after the application is saved. This will lock your proposal from further editing and move it to the **Authorization** step, which is completed by the Institutional Signatory.

6.1. Authorization (Institutional Approval)

Submitted applications are first routed to the Institutional Signatory identified in the application for approval and final submission to the Society. Once you have submitted your application, a system message will be sent automatically via e-mail to the Institutional Signatory stating that an application is pending authorization. The Institutional Signatory must log on to the system, open the application, and approve or authorize the application before it is submitted to the Society. This step **must** be completed **prior** to 5:00 PM Eastern Time on the date of the deadline.

Please note, the Institutional Signatory must be registered with the system and must be the individual designated by you in the **Institution Officials** section of the application.

6.2. Confirmation of Submission and Next Steps

Once your Institutional Signatory has submitted the application, the Principal Investigator and Institutional Signatory will both receive an automated email confirming receipt of your application by the Society. When your application is successfully submitted, it will be available for review and printing in your portal under the section **Submitted/Under Review**.

Please note, applicants are also required to complete an interview with one reviewer during the application review process. Staff will reach out to applicants about 2 months following the deadline with instructions on how to schedule the required interview. For additional information, please refer to the Policies and Procedures for the complete funding opportunity requirements.

7. APPLICATION CHECKLIST

To assist you in verifying that you have completed all steps in the application process, here is a checklist that you can use once you are ready to submit your proposal.

- Have you completed all required items in the **Project Information** section?
- Have you completed all required items in the **Institution Officials** section?
- Have you completed all required items for the **Mentor Information** section?
- Have you completed all required items for the **Mentor's Training Experience** section?
- Have you uploaded **Biographical Sketches** for all professional staff on the project, including the PI and mentor?
- Have you completed the **Plain Language Description**?
- Have you completed the **Scientific Summary**?
- Have you uploaded your completed **Proposal Narrative**?
- Have you completed all required items in the **Human Subjects and/or Vertebrate Animals** section?
- Have you uploaded **Other Support** for all professional staff on the project?
- Have you completed the **Budget** for all years of the proposed project?
- Have you uploaded the **Mentor's Letter** of support for the project?
- Have you completed the information for the **Reference letters** for the proposed project for at least 3 people?
- If applicable, have you uploaded all of the **Letters** of support/collaboration/approval?
- If applicable, have you uploaded all of the **Materials** in the appendix?
- Has the Institutional Signatory of your organization **Authorized** submission of your application?

8. HELP IS AVAILABLE

Basic questions about word processing functions such as copying and pasting, pagination, etc. and questions concerning PDF files should be referred to your organization's IT department or a colleague.

If you have any questions concerning the online application process such as using the online screens, file uploads and downloads; questions about National Multiple Sclerosis Society policy or the content of your proposal, please contact one of the following members of the Research Programs team:

Program Contact

Anna Lampe, Ph.D. anna.lampe@nmss.org

MSGrants Troubleshooting

Phyllis Motta phyllis.motta@nmss.org

Caryn Knutsen caryn.knutsen@nmss.org

Please note that online and telephone support is only available Monday through Friday from 9 A.M. to 5 P.M. Eastern Time.