National Multiple Sclerosis Society

**Instructions for Submission: Request for Applications**

"Generating Knowledge and Tools to Address Compartmentalized Inflammation in Multiple Sclerosis"

**National Multiple Sclerosis Society**

***2022***

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

**Pre-application Deadline: 5:00 pm Eastern Time, March 23, 2022**
**Full application Deadline: 5:00 pm Eastern Time, March 30, 2022**

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://nmss.fluxx.io**

Please note:

- Compatible browsers include **Chrome, Firefox,** and **Safari.** Internet Explorer is **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. Additional details concerning the content for your application can be found in the request for applications announcement, also available on the MSGrants website.

Applications that are incomplete or exceed the page limitations and applications that use undersized 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 never 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:

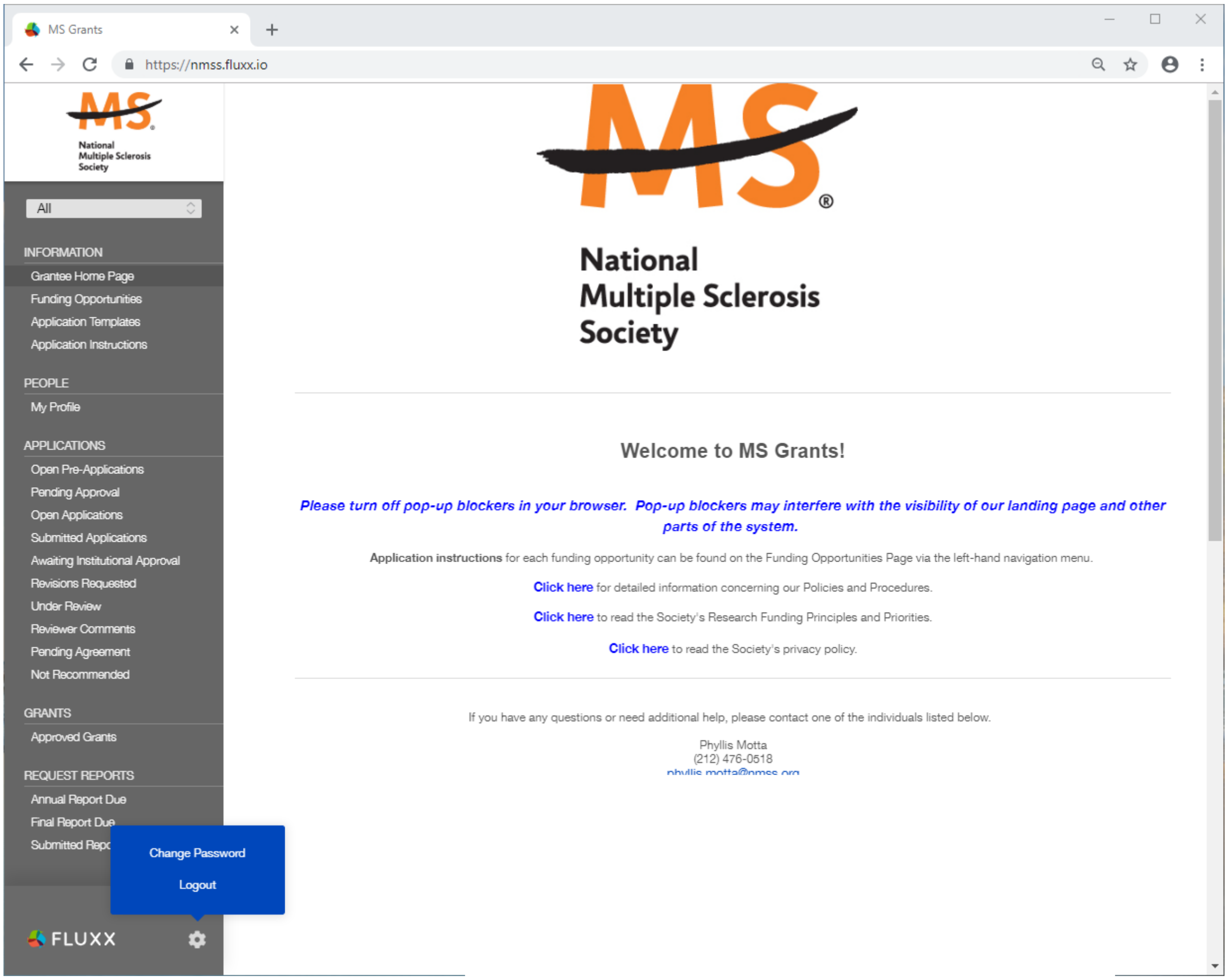
- Uppercase letter (A through Z)
- Lowercase letter (a through z)
- Number (0 through 9)

### 1.3. A Word about Passwords

It is important that you do 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 available to use for preparing specific funding opportunity narratives
- A Word template to use for preparing biographical sketches
- An example of a lay 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 new applications and pre-applications that have been started AND saved, but not yet submitted. These pre-applications can be edited.

**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 future revision.

**Pending Institutional Approval—**Full applications that are pending institutional approval for final submission can be found here.

**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.

**Reviewer Comments—**Applications that have with reviewer comments available will appear here. 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.

## 2.4. Grants

**Approved Grants—**All granted applications that have been approved for funding can be found here for reference. Grants 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 research strategies 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 full application 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 and click on **Apply Now** to open the pre- application form.

- **Title:** Enter a title for your pre-application (this can be changed later)
- **Eligibility Quiz:** The Eligibility quiz will determine whether you are eligible to apply for that funding opportunity. 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:** If you have only one organizational affiliation, the **Organization** field will be pre-populated. If you have an incorrect affiliation or have moved, please contact the Society to change your affiliation.
- **Principal Investigator:** In the **Principal Investigator** field, select your name from the drop-down list.
- **Institutional or Primary Signatory:** This is the individual 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. If you do not know who this is, leave it blank, and you will be able to edit or input correct information before you submit your full application.
- **Project Details:** In the **Project Details** text boxes, insert a brief (500 words or less) description of your proposed project and an explanation of how the project fits the stated objective of the RFA (500 words or less). You can type these in directly or prepare them offline and copy and paste them into the text boxes.
- **Project Zip Code:** In the **Project Zip Code** field enter the zip code (U.S. applications) where the work will actually be done. If more than one site is going to be used, this should be the Zip code of the primary or lead site.
- **Estimate of Amount Requested:** In the **Estimate of Amount Requested** field, enter your best estimate of the total cost of your proposed project, including 10% indirect costs (Note: Indirect costs are only allowed on U.S. based projects). This figure will allow Society staff to gauge the overall amount of funding that is likely to be requested during a given cycle. This figure will not be used to evaluate whether or not to approve your pre-application and you

will be able to change this figure later.

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, although you will 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 you will receive an automated message and you 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

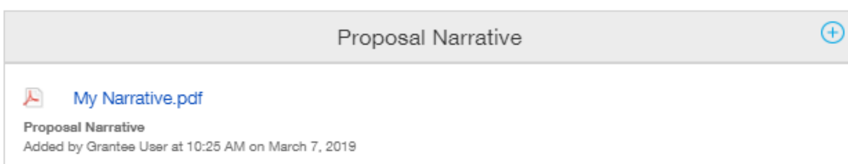
**Editing**—Any time before you submit your proposal, you can click on the edit button in the **upper right corner** to open your proposal for further editing.

**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 center** of the application when in edit mode.

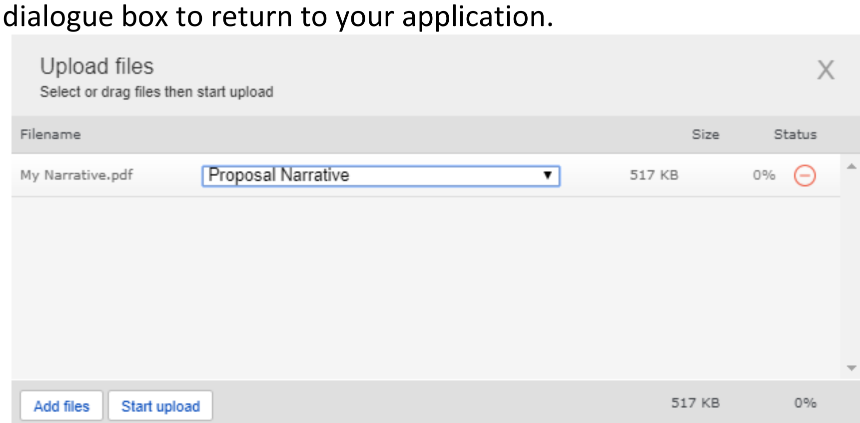
**Expanding sections**—Black triangles ▶ indicate the sections of the application that will expand to open when you click on the triangle. The default of the application is for each section to be collapsed so only section headers are visible. You should open each section and complete all the required components in the section. Clicking the triangle again 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. Additionally, paper copies will not be accepted and will be discarded if they are received by the Society.

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

**Submitting**—If you have completed your application, you can use the submit button located at the **bottom center** of the application while in 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 corner**. Once you withdraw an application, it will not be considered. This option is generally used when an investigator has inadvertently started a duplicate application or an application is not submitted.

### 4.2. Required Fields

This section is a list of required fields for the application. All fields that must be completed before the application can be submitted.

### 4.3. Project Information

This section includes basic information about the proposed project. Select one item from the **General Discipline** list. To assist you in selecting the 4-6 **Keywords** that are a required part of this section, a list of available keywords can be downloaded from the Grantee Home Page.

### 4.4. Principal Investigator and Institutional Official

In this section you will indicate the Principal Investigator and Institutional Official.

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. The Principal Investigator may not serve as the institutional signatory.

In this section you will also confirm information for your Financial Officer. This information will be used if your application is awarded.

### 4.5. Research and Project Team

All key personnel involved in the project should be listed. This will assist the Society in more effectively tracking all of the researchers and clinicians who participate in Society-funded projects.

**Biographical Sketches—**Biographical sketches are required for all key personnel working on the project, including the applicant. All biographical sketches must be uploaded in NIH format as a PDF.

### 4.6. 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 Request for Applications.

### 4.7. 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.

Note: All research proposals deemed to be of scientific merit through the scientific peer review process undergo a Community Review to help us identify participant-centered concerns about proposed research, such as unduly burdensome protocols or outcomes of low interest to people affected by MS. These insights, along with the outcomes from the peer review, will be taken together to inform the final funding recommendations. The Community Review Committee will rely heavily on the Plain Language Description for each proposal. 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.

### 4.8. 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 provided on the Grantee Home page for downloading. This template parallels NIH format. Specifications are 12 pages single spaced (not including references), 11 point or larger font, and half-inch margins on all sides. Once the narrative is completed, it must be converted to PDF format and uploaded in this section. Applicants who have a narrative prepared for a NIH application can use this as a basis if it conforms to the above dimensions, but you must add a section on how the proposed project addresses the specific Request for Applications and the National MS Society's Pathways to Cures Roadmap (details below).

**Organizing Your Narrative—**To facilitate the review of your application, it is required that you organize the discussion of your proposed research using the following guidelines:

**Research plan:**
The individual subsections below may be any length as long as the total for the entire research plan does not exceed the **12-PAGE LIMIT.** Include all text, figures, and data tables related to the research plan in this section.

- **Specific Aims—**Provide a concise statement of each objective of the proposed research project.
- **Background—**Provide a brief summary of the background for this project, including existing knowledge in the area and long-term goals of your research.
- **Preliminary Results—**Use this section to report the Principal Investigator's preliminary studies pertinent to the application. Include any information that will help establish the experience and competence of the investigators to pursue the proposed research.
- **Experimental Design and Methods—**Describe the design of experiments and the procedures used to undertake the proposed studies. Where appropriate, include possible outcomes, pitfalls, and alternative plans.
- **Relevance to the Request for Applications-** Identify how this project relates to the goals of the Request for Applications.
- **Facilities Available—**Describe the facilities available for the conduct of the proposed research, and list major items of equipment that are available for use in the project. **FACILITIES PAGE LIMIT: one page—within the 12-page narrative limit.**

**References and Literature-**To facilitate the review of your application, give the full title and bibliographic reference for all work cited in your application. **NO PAGE LIMIT**, i.e., the references can go beyond the 12-page limit of the research plan.

### 4.9. Letters Submitted with Application

This is the section where 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.

### 4.10. Materials Submitted with Application

This is the section where appendix materials submitted with your application are uploaded.

Appendix materials must be in PDF format and can be uploaded as either a combined file or multiple PDF files. ***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 negative assessment by the peer review panel.***

Items commonly included in the appendix are:

- **Publications—**Reprints, preprints, manuscripts, etc. that are relevant to the proposed project 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.
- **Other Materials—**If your proposed study utilizes questionnaires or other types of printed assessment instruments, you may want to include these as part of the appendix. 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.

### 4.11. 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 IRB approval memos, they must be included along with any letters uploaded in PDF format as part of the application. (See next two sections)

IRB Approval File (if applicable)—If your proposed research involves human subjects, you must provide a signed and dated approval letter from the Institutional Review Board 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. Budget

The Society requires a detailed budget for all years of the proposed project. The budget must be prepared using our online budget module. The budget module is divided into sections such as "Personnel," "Equipment," "Supplies," etc. To add a line item to the budget, click on the green "+" button to open the form. The system will calculate the total budget per year after each line item has been added to the application. Please note, it is recommended that you save the application after each budget section has been completed to expedite the calculation process. The budget module automatically calculates direct costs, indirect costs, and totals. Please note that you cannot edit the indirect cost section. This section is calculated by the system based on your entries and is not editable by applicants.

Note: Please review the Policies and Procedures for information regarding General Categories of Expenditures.

**Sub-Contractor Budget—**The online system also includes the ability to calculate subcontract budgets and integrate them into the main budget. Like the overall budget, any subcontractor budgets should provide budget detail for all years of the project. The Society will pay up to 10% indirect costs on subcontracts to US institutions, with the usual exclusions for equipment. As with the main budget, only direct costs should be entered and the system will calculate indirect costs automatically.

## 4.13. Budget Justification

The budget justification can be typed directly into the text box online or copy and pasted into the text box from a word processor.

**Sub-Contractor Budget Justification**—The budget justification can be typed directly into the text box online or copy and pasted into the text box from a word processor.

## 4.14. 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.

## 4.15. Applicant Demographics

The Society is requesting demographic information to be used for internal purposes only, specifically to help inform the Society's Diversity, Equity and Inclusivity initiatives. This information will only be available to Society staff and not to external reviewers. Feel free to select "Do not prefer to say;" this will not affect consideration of an application.

## 5. DUAL SUBMISION 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 indicated on the **Project Information Section** of the Apply Online system.

## 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 center of the application while in edit mode. This will lock your proposal from further editing and move it to the **Authorization** step that is completed by the Institutional Signatory.

### 6.1. Authorization (Institutional Approval)

Submitted applications are first routed to the Institutional or Primary 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 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 ***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 **Institutional Official** section of the application.

### 6.2. Confirmation

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 **Under Review**.

## 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 **Institutional Official** section?

☐ Have you listed all professional staff in the **Project Staff** section?

☐ Have you uploaded **Biographical Sketches** for all professional staff on the project, including the PI?

☐ Have you completed the **Scientific Summary**?

☐ Have you completed the **Plain Language Description**?

☐ Have you uploaded your completed **Proposal Narrative**?

☐ 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?

☐ Have you completed all required items in the **Human Subjects and/or Vertebrate Animals** section?

☐ Have you completed the **Budget** for all years of the proposed project?

☐ Have you completed the **Budget Justification** for all years of the proposed project?

☐ If applicable, have you completed the **Subcontract Budget(s)** for any subcontracts?

☐ If applicable, have you uploaded a **Budget Justification** for any subcontracts?

☐ Have you uploaded **Other Support** for all professional staff on the project?

☐ 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:

MSGrants Troubleshooting:

| | |
|---|---|
| Phyllis Motta | phyllis.motta@nmss.org |
| Caryn Knutsen | caryn.knutsen@nmss.org |

RFA Program Contacts

| | |
|---|---|
| Fiona Brabazon, Ph.D. | fiona.brabazon@nmss.org |
| Walter Kostich, Ph.D. | walter.kostich@nmss.org |

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