



NMSS RESEARCH GRANT MANUAL

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1. Introduction

The National Multiple Sclerosis Society (NMSS) in the UAE is an NGO that comprises local and international experts, medical professionals, strategic advisors, MS ambassadors, and volunteers. NMSS is committed to ensuring that people affected by MS receive high-quality care, emotional support, and reliable guidance. It achieves this by funding cutting-edge research both in the UAE and globally, educating the public about early diagnosis, collaborating with international and regional partners to advocate for better care, and promoting educational and wellness programs. Ultimately, NMSS works towards a vision where no one continues to suffer from multiple sclerosis (MS).

2. NMSS Research Priorities

NMSS is committed to achieving breakthroughs to cure MS. To achieve this goal, NMSS collaborates with the Department of Health Abu Dhabi and its affiliates to successfully execute research grants to contribute to valuable research.

To be considered by the NMSS Grant for funding, all projects must show relevance to the NMSS's research priorities. The priorities have been developed in consultation with scientific experts, healthcare providers, and people affected by MS in the UAE.

- Advancing innovative and emerging treatments that can slow, stop, or reverse MS:
 - Prioritizes the development and implementation of cutting-edge therapies aimed at slowing, halting, or reversing the progression of multiple sclerosis, leveraging the latest advancements in medical research and technology.
- Understanding the clinical characteristics, epidemiology, incidence, and prevalence of MS in the UAE:
 - Exploring the unique clinical features, distribution, frequency, and occurrence of MS within the UAE to better tailor treatment and support strategies to the local population.
- Understanding the role of genetics in MS in the UAE and globally:
 - Researching the genetic factors that may contribute to the development of MS, both within the UAE and in a global context, to identify hereditary patterns and potential genetic interventions.
- Uncovering suspected risk factors for MS in the UAE population:
 - Identifying potential biological, environmental, and lifestyle risk factors specific to the UAE population that may increase the likelihood of developing MS.

- Understanding the efficacy and effect of specific treatments on populations in the UAE, including new treatments in clinical trials, RIS/CIS treatments, DMTs and COVID-19 severity, pregnancy and DMTs:
 - Evaluating how various treatments, including those in clinical trials and established therapies for related conditions, impact the effectiveness and safety for people in the UAE, particularly considering factors such as disease-modifying therapies (DMTs), pregnancy, and COVID-19.
- Exploring the state of access to treatment in the UAE, MENA region and globally:
 - Investigating the availability and accessibility of MS treatments across the UAE, the broader MENA region, and worldwide, striving to improve access and address disparities in care.

3. Terms and funding

The NMSS grant funds will support research for 1 year. The Grant can continue for a maximum of 3 years, subject to the progress of the project.

Research grants will not exceed the maximum value of AED 700,000 per year. The Grant will be awarded for 1 year where funding for any subsequent year is dependent upon a) availability of funds; and b) receipt, review, and approval of bi-annual research progress reports and financial statements.

4. Eligibility guidelines

For NMSS to reach as many researchers, universities and institutions that can apply for the Grant, an outreach plan has been drafted to ensure as many stakeholders and applicants as possible are aware of our Research Grant Cycles. The following criteria apply for eligibility to our Grant:

- The Primary Investigator (PI) must hold a PhD and/or MD.
- The PI should be a UAE-based academic and/or clinical neurologist and/or health professional practicing in an academic institution and/or clinical setting with authorization to conduct research in the UAE.
- Proposals that include partnerships with universities and hospitals (multi-center studies) are encouraged.
- The research project must align with the theme of the grant cycle “**Advancing MS Innovation through Autoimmune Discovery**”
- The research must be of scientific value to the scientific community at large and must be designed to provide meaningful information or conclusions with clear value to the MS community in the UAE, regionally or globally.

- Collaborations with international institutions are encouraged. The grant funds from NMSS will only be transferred to the primary institution located in the UAE. However, no more than 50% of the total budget may be transferred to international collaborators.
- PIs who applied for or were awarded a grant in the previous round are eligible to apply again. However, priority will be for applicants who were not awarded funding in the preceding funding cycle.
- The amount awarded for the research must not exceed the legitimate costs incurred in inducting the research and must be commensurate with and not exceed fair market value for the research activities.
- All applicable regulatory requirements must be observed, including, as appropriate, regulatory filings and ethics committee/IRB review and approvals from all participating institutions (Please note that any research conducted outside Abu Dhabi will require IRB approval from the relevant ethics committee).

PROJECT DURATION

- Proposed projects must span a minimum of 1 year and a maximum of 3 years.

FUNDING RANGE

- Grants will range from **AED 500,000 to AED 2,000,000 per project**, based on proposal quality and budget justification.
- The **annual budget per project** should not exceed **AED 700,000**.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

- If the research proposal is selected, it is mandatory to be approved by both local and Emirate level Institutional Review Boards (IRB).
- A full application will be reviewed and evaluated by the NMSS Scientific Taskforce.
- Selected proposals from Abu Dhabi will have to move forward with their IRB application from DOH independently.
- Applicants and collaborators from outside Abu Dhabi will need to apply for their IRB approval from their respective institutions.

5. Review and award schedule for applications

<i>Grant cycle opens</i>	<i>01 June 2026</i>
<i>Letter of Intent Deadline</i>	<i>05 July 2026</i>
<i>Full application Deadline</i>	<i>23 August 2026</i>
<i>Official Notice of Approval (dates subject to modification)</i>	<i>December 2026</i>

Anticipated start date	February 2027
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**For exact application deadlines and potential start dates, please see our website.*

6. Application procedures

6.1 pre-application

A letter of intent must be completed and submitted to NMSS before the applicant can prepare a full application. The letter of intent is reviewed by NMSS to ensure that the proposal is consistent with the funding opportunity and the mission of NMSS. Once the letter of intent is approved, you will receive an approval email to start preparations for the full application. In some cases, NMSS may send the letter of intent back to you for clarification or changes before final approval.

Please note, for applicants with existing NMSS grants, applications may be declined if the applicant has any overdue progress reports and/or new awards might not be executed until the applicant is compliant with the existing grant report.

6.2 Full Application

Once your letter of intent has been approved, you can log in to the grant management system and begin the full application process.

Please ensure you submit the required documentation:

- Research Application Form: [Research Grant Application](#).
- Full Protocol/Proposal
- Funding and Budget Form
- Institutionary Signature
- CVs/GCPs for the research team
- Data collection sheet, if applicable
- Consent form, if applicable
- Survey/Questionnaire, if applicable
- Exemption form if data will be transferred outside the United Arab Emirates.

Please ensure that the research project is fully detailed. All project milestones and budget line-items for all expenses of the project period must be provided.

7. Administration of the research grant

The administration of the NMSS research grant is a joint collaboration between the NMSS and the Department of Health Abu Dhabi.

7.1 Review and funding decisions: NMSS will review the required brief pre-application to determine whether the research proposal is appropriate and relevant to the NMSS research priorities.

Upon submitting the full application, the applications undergo scientific evaluation first.

Criteria for evaluation: The applications will be evaluated based on significance of the project, the relevance of the project to the NMSS's research priorities, the alignment to the Grant Cycle theme, the approach or methods to be used, the innovation and feasibility of its concepts, the Principal Investigators' qualifications and available resources, and suitability of the proposed budget.

Applications from institutions in Abu Dhabi that have scored high during the scientific evaluation will proceed independently to the IRB approval phase with DOH. All applicants, however, are required to obtain IRB approval from their respective institutional review offices prior to project initiation.

Finally, NMSS, after considering scientific and IRB approvals, makes the final strategic decision for the projects that will be advanced for funding.

7.2 Regulatory policies: NMSS will not support research involving human subjects without prior receipt of written approval of the specific research proposed from all relevant IRB (or another appropriate Committee) of respective institutions.

7.3 Notifications: All applicants are notified via Optimy of the status of their applications. For those approved for funding, the Principal Investigator will be notified by email of the duration and amount of the award and will be provided with a budget that reflects acceptable types and amounts of expenditures for each award year.

7.4 Budget – This section outlines the allowable and disallowed expenses for grant funds provided by NMSS. It includes guidelines on the use of funds for consumable supplies, travel, and other research-related expenditures, ensuring compliance with institutional policies and grant-specific requirements.

- Disallowed expenses: Grant funds cannot be utilized for facilities and administrative (F&A) costs. This includes administrative support personnel, procurement, bookkeeping, financial record maintenance, laundry, and maintenance services. Construction or renovation costs are not permissible under any circumstances. Funds are not permitted to cover tuition, similar fees, or membership fees to organizations such as federations or societies. Budgeting funds as “contingency or overhead funds” is only allowed with special arrangement from NMSS. Without prior written consent from NMSS, expenditures not explicitly listed in the award budget are likely to be rejected.
- Consumable supplies: Consumable supplies may be acquired using NMSS grant funds and can include any type of laboratory supplies, including the purchase and maintenance of experimental animals.
- Travel fees of more than 12,000 AED per grant must be justified in the proposal.
- Other expense: Any other costs directly related to the cost of conducting the proposed research may be requested in the grant application should follow the institutional policies and customary practice of research conduct.

8. The award period

8.1. Award Payment Schedule: Payment of the award will be disbursed in two installments, bi-yearly. For multi-year awards, subject to the terms of this policy and grant agreement, payment of subsequent years is dependent upon a) availability of funds; and b) receipt, review, and approval by NMSS of research progress reports and financial statements.

8.2. Progress Reports: Awarded team shall submit to NMSS written progress reports every 6 months describing the research performed and the interim results and a statement of expenditures. For a full overview of what is expected in the progress and final report, please refer to the reporting guidelines. The NMSS may request additional interim reports as needed.

8.3. Annual Report: Prior to completion of the first year of the research project, the awarded institution shall submit to NMSS a report describing the research performed and the status of the project, including results and findings, and a statement of expenditures for the period of the grant.

8.4. Extension of Term (No cost extension): An extension of the term of a grant without additional funds may be approved when requested and justified in writing. Extensions of the term will be for either 3 or 6 months, and, except for unusual circumstances, only one extension will be given for any grant. A request for an extension must include: (1) the amount of money to be carried into the extension period; (2) a statement of why the funds were not used in the original grant period; (3) a statement of how the funds will be used during the extension; and (4) a report of the research progress. A request for an extension must be made within 30 days of the end date of the grant. In certain circumstances, NMSS may grant a no-cost extension at its discretion.

8.5. Publications and Reprints: NMSS expects that the results of research will be published in appropriate journals. The responsibility for publication lies with the Principal Investigator. NMSS must be acknowledged in all dissemination materials (e.g., publications, scientific exhibits, scientific presentations, press releases, etc.) related to the research supported in full or in part by NMSS. NMSS could request to be a co-author in peer-reviewed publications.