

GUIDANCE FOR PEER REVIEWERS OF RESEARCH GRANT APPLICATIONS

Like all funders of research, the MND Association relies on the time and expertise of many other expert researchers to review the funding applications received. The following general guidance is available to all those approached as peer reviewers. Separate detailed guidance is provided to those participating in the Research Advisory Panels. Specific instructions about completing the review are sent with the paperwork once a researcher has agreed to participate.

Confidentiality

When agreeing to participate as a reviewer for the MND Association, reviewers agree that all funding applications are strictly confidential.

It is therefore agreed that all documents and correspondence related to a funding application:

- Should not be disseminated
- Should not be discussed with anyone else during the review process without the prior agreement of MND Association staff
- If printed, should be kept secure and disposed of securely after the review has been submitted
- As electronic documents, should be kept secure and deleted after the review has been submitted.

Regarding the second point above, there may be valid reasons for a reviewer to discuss an application with a second named researcher, but this should be pre-agreed with MND Association staff. For example: the reviewer is an early career researcher being advised by a more experienced mentor; or two researchers with complementary expertise working together can provide a better review of the application than either of them alone. In some cases, the MND Association may request or recommend the 'shared review process' or it may be suggested by a reviewer to MND Association staff when they are first approached.

While membership of each Research Advisory Panel will be publicly available, the identity of external peer reviewers of individual applications will remain confidential, only known by MND Association staff and members of the appropriate panel.

Reviewers have a right to expect that their comments will be treated in confidence by MND Association staff and by the members of the Research Advisory Panel.

Grant applicants will receive anonymised feedback from the reviewers, as specified on the review form.

Conflicts of Interest

When completing a review of a funding application for the MND Association, reviewers are asked to confirm that they do not have any conflict of interest.

Examples of conflicts of interest include researchers who:

1. are from the same immediate institution (same department/unit) as any of the applicants, and who interact with the applicant(s) in the course of their duties at the institution
2. have collaborated, published or been a co-applicant for any funding with the applicant(s), within the last five years
3. are planning to collaborate or jointly apply for funding in the near future
4. have been a student or supervisor of the applicant(s) within the last five years
5. are a close personal friend or relative of any of the applicant(s)
6. have had long-standing scientific or personal differences with any applicant(s)
7. are in a position to gain or lose financially from the outcome of the application (eg hold stock in a company of an industry partner or a competitor)
8. for some other reason, feel that they cannot provide an objective review of the application.

Regarding point (2) – if the reviewer and applicant(s) are involved in a large collaboration and/or are co-authors of papers with large authorship, a realistic view should be taken. For example, if both researchers have contributed samples or data to a large international study being coordinated by a third party, that would not constitute a conflict of interest. However, if either the applicant or reviewer was the coordinator of the study, selecting which researchers could participate in the collaboration, that might be a conflict.

Undertaking research in a similar area is not considered to be a conflict of interest.

If a potential reviewer is unsure, they should consult MND Association staff.

Data Protection

The following Data Protection Statement is applied to all email invitations to potential peer reviewers

We identify potential peer reviewers and find their email addresses in the following ways:

- Using publicly available information, eg PubMed, Europe Pub Med Central, websites of universities and journals
- Using information obtained through the MND Association's coordination of the International Symposium on ALS/MND
- By personal recommendation from other researchers.

We store basic information, such as researcher name, institute, email address and previous peer reviews on our secure internal grants management database.

If you wish to opt out of future requests to be a peer reviewer, please reply to this email to let us know. We will record this choice and try to avoid contacting you about peer review in future. This will not affect any other communication from the Association, eg regarding the Symposium.