Guidance for Project grant and Proof-of-Principle grant applications

Guidance for all applicants

Please refer to our Terms and Conditions and Research Strategy when completing your application. Terms and conditions, along with information about the call, can be downloaded from the Help – Support Documents quick link on the online application portal homepage, or from the Help – Support Documents drop-down item in the top right-hand corner of any webpage when you are logged in to Smart Simple.

If you have any questions, please contact the Research Team at researchgrants@musculardystrophyuk.org.

To apply you should submit the following:

1. An application using our online application form, by **3pm on Tuesday 20 January 2026**.
2. A signed copy of the scientific application by email to researchgrants@musculardystrophyuk.org, which can arrive up to three weeks after the submission deadline.
    - We prefer that you scan wet signatures, but we understand that this is not always possible and will accept electronic signatures when necessary.
    - If the size of the scanned document is problematic, we will accept the signature page only provided you annotate the page with the grant reference.

Applications will not be accepted after the submission deadline.

The following points should be considered when submitting your application:

- All applications should be submitted through our online grants-management system, Smart Simple (https://mduk.smartsimpleuk.com/). If you do not have an existing profile on Smart Simple you must create one. If you work at an institution which is not already listed on our system, please contact us to help you create the profile.
- The Principal Applicant must hold a contract that extends beyond the duration of the grant at an institution approved by Muscular Dystrophy UK. For the 2026 Grant Round, Muscular Dystrophy UK will only fund UK-based research, although international collaboration is encouraged.
- If you currently hold a Muscular Dystrophy UK-funded project or studentship grant, you may still apply.
- Each applicant can submit up to one application per grant type in a grant round. Multiple applications for the same grant type will not be accepted.
- In line with MDUK's new research strategy, we strongly encourage applications from early-career researchers (defined as researchers who possess a PhD who have not yet gained, or are transitioning to, an independent research career – typically up to 10 years post-PhD). We continue to encourage and support applications from existing principal investigators. Applications from allied health professionals are also welcomed but they must meet the requirements set out below.
- A single resubmission of a previous MDUK grant application is allowed and should be indicated as such in the relevant field in the application form.

Remit

- Muscular Dystrophy UK welcomes applications that will have a benefit for individuals with any of the muscular dystrophies or related neuromuscular conditions. We are looking to support research across the breadth of conditions supported by the charity, and welcome applications for rare and very-rare conditions as well as the more common ones. Please refer to the list of conditions supported by Muscular Dystrophy UK. If a specific neuromuscular condition does not appear in this list and you want to make a research application related to that condition, please contact our grant helpline for guidance (researchgrants@musculardystrophyuk.org).

- It is important for applicants to view their research strategically and explain how their proposed research fits with the charity's Research Strategy in answer to the relevant question in the application form.
- In the development of diagnostic tools, there must be clear evidence of the exploitation route and pathway to adoption.
- Research to develop animal models must demonstrate a clear route to a therapeutic application. We will only fund the creation and phenotyping of new animal models when there is no alternative available.
- Research projects collecting data from people with lived experience, patient reported outcome measures, and/or natural history data should be multi-centre and of sufficient duration and size to collect relevant and useful data. It is important that there is a harmonised approach across the field and applications should include international communication and/or collaboration. They should include multiple outcome measures (and where possible include multi-system measures) to be of maximum value to researchers and funders. The application should include a plan for financial sustainability in the longer term.
- Applicants looking for support for an infrastructure grant, such as a patient registry should contact Muscular Dystrophy UK to discuss potential funding opportunities outside of the grant round.

When completing the online form:

- Complete all sections of the application form. Mandatory fields are marked with an asterisk.
- You may find it easier to draft the questions offline and copy and paste them into the online form when complete. Please note that when copying and pasting from Word, formatting (such as italics, bold, underlining) will be lost, but paragraphs will be kept.
- Word limits must be adhered to.
- Uploaded documents must be in pdf format.
- You can save your application at any time and come back to complete it later. You can also download a pdf of your application at any point.

If you still have questions, please contact the Research Team at researchgrants@musculardystrophyuk.org.

Guidance for completing an online project grant application form

In Smart Simple, please go to My Profile and complete the required fields. This information will then be used to auto-populate the relevant fields in your grant application(s). Submissions cannot be completed unless the required fields in your profile are complete. For future grant calls you will be prompted to review your My Profile information to ensure it is up to date.

The following guidance relates to sections and questions within the form. Ensure you follow the guidance when answering each question.

People section

Who can apply for a Muscular Dystrophy UK grant

- Principal Applicants must hold a contract at a UK-based Institution approved by Muscular Dystrophy UK. We are only able to fund research within the UK at the present time, although international collaborations are encouraged.
- In line with MDUK's new research strategy, we strongly encourage applications from early-career researchers (defined as researchers who possess a PhD who have not yet gained, or are transitioning to, an independent research career – typically up to 10 years post-PhD). We continue to encourage and support applications from existing principal investigators. Applications from allied health professionals are also welcomed but they must meet the requirements set out below.

Principal Applicant

In this section we want to understand the track record of the Principal Applicant.

The Principal Applicant should have a contract of sufficient duration to cover the length of the proposed project. This is what we aim to understand when we ask the questions regarding "The length of the Principal Applicant's contract with the employing Institution" and "Where does the funding for the Principal Applicant's salary come from?" If you do not have a contract of sufficient length, we may request a letter of support from your Head of Department to provide a guarantee that the project will be adequately supervised for its duration.

If you are an early-career researcher, please provide details of how this project will help to develop your career.

Principal Applicants should have a research degree e.g. PhD or MD. We will accept applications from clinical researchers or Allied Health Professionals who do not have a research degree but in those circumstances the Principal Applicant should demonstrate significant research experience in a field relevant to the proposal and should be familiar with relevant methodology.

If you are in doubt about the requirements of a Principal Applicant for an MDUK grant please contact us at Researchgrants@musculardystrophyuk.org.

Co-applicant details

To add a Co-applicant the Principal Applicant (the Applicant) must have the Co-applicant's PIN. To get a PIN, the Co-applicant must create a profile in Smart Simple. The PIN can be found on the Co-applicant's profile page. The Principal Applicant should request the PIN from the Co-applicant and enter it on the application form to assign the Co-applicant to the grant application. The Co-applicant will be able to view the application and make changes, but only the Principal Applicant can submit the form.

Co-applicants can view the application by selecting the Grants and Applications tab from the home page and selecting the Associated Applications tab in the Draft Applications section.

Please ensure you enter the number of hours the Co-applicant will be dedicating to the project.

Collaborators

Please enter the details of all collaborators in the table provided; a letter of collaboration is required from each one. Please use the filename format, 'Letter-of-collaboration-[FirstInitial-surname]' to name the files and upload them in pdf format. The letters can be uploaded using the upload buttons. Note that the number of collaborator letters must match the number of collaborators in order for your application to be submitted.

Proposed researcher

The proposed researcher category should cover the person/persons undertaking the day-to-day activities of the project. If the proposed researcher is known, please enter their details.

Project Summary section

Project title

Please use a descriptive title and, if possible, add the name of the condition(s) to be studied. We submit titles to the Association of Medical Research Charities (AMRC) annual data collection (a requirement of our membership), which is then used in the UK Health Research Analysis. A descriptive title will ensure that the condition you study is reflected in the analysis and gets due recognition.

Project length

Project grants of 24 or 36 months in duration are available. Proof-of-principle awards can be for between 6 and 12 months. Please note that if you are applying for a grant of less than 12 months duration you should select 12 months from the drop-down menu and indicate in the proposal text the duration of the grant.

Expected start date

You will receive the outcome of your grant application in late July 2026. The expected start date of the project should therefore not be before September 2026.

The expected start date is merely a guide. It will appear on your award letter should you be successful in gaining an MDUK grant, but it is not binding. Please refer to our Terms and Conditions which sets out the expectations with regards to project start dates after the award is made.

Project and proof-of-principle grants should start within six months of the award date. If you are awarded a Muscular Dystrophy UK grant and experience delays that mean you cannot start within six months, please contact us at Researchgrants@musculardystrophyuk.org.

Detail any potential delays that would push back your expected start date

We want to know what could delay the start of the grant. We appreciate that the start date of a grant can be subject to delays, e.g. due to recruitment of staff, obtaining ethical (or other) permissions. Please consider what could trigger such delays. What plans do you have to mitigate and reduce such delays? If you are

awarded the funds the Research Team may want to follow up with you to ensure a timely start for the project.

Abstract

As with the title, please make this descriptive and include the full name of the condition(s) to be studied. As described above, we share this data with the AMRC. If you consider the contents of the abstract to be sensitive, please add the word CONFIDENTIAL in upper case at the beginning of the abstract.

Condition

Please select the single most relevant condition for your application as the primary condition.

You should select the overarching group name for the condition, following which you will be given the option to select the exact condition. For example, if you are looking for Duchenne muscular dystrophy you should select, 'muscular dystrophy' and then 'Duchenne muscular dystrophy'. We understand that some applications may be relevant to multiple conditions. In that case, please choose "various" and ensure that you list the main conditions relevant to your application in the text under the Proposal tab.

When you select the group heading, if there are additional condition sub-types, e.g. Duchenne muscular dystrophy, myotonic dystrophy type 1, they will appear in the sub-type, drop down menu.

You will then be able to select other relevant conditions using the tick boxes. Please select the group heading and sub-type.

Relevance to MDUK's Research Strategy

Please describe how your application fits with our Research Strategy.

Resubmission

A single resubmission of a previous MDUK grant application is allowed. Please indicate whether the application is a resubmission of an application previously submitted to Muscular Dystrophy UK.

If so, please highlight any differences/amendments that have been made to the original application.

Submission to multiple funders

Muscular Dystrophy UK will only consider an application if we are currently the only funder doing so. If your application is currently with another funder, we will not process your application. You are welcome to apply in future should your application elsewhere be unsuccessful.

If this application has previously been submitted elsewhere, please tell us where the application was submitted and on what date.

Please tell us if this application (or parts of it) are to be submitted for funding elsewhere. If so, include details of the source of funding, the amount and the expected date of outcome.

The Proposal section

Background to the proposal

Please provide sufficient background to give expert reviewers and members of the research committee an understanding of the basis for your proposal and summarise any research that gives your proposal context. Note that, while external reviewers will be selected for their expertise, some members of the research committee may not have relevant expertise and may rely on this section of the proposal. When completing this section please consider:

- If you have preliminary data, please refer to it in the text and upload it in the supplementary information section at the bottom of the Proposal tab.
- Formatting does not always pull through when pasting from Word documents. Please check that special characters are present in your pasted text (this also pertains to other sections below where you might use special characters).

Hypothesis or reasoning

This is an opportunity for you to outline the underlying scientific hypothesis or reasoning for your project.

Methods of research including overall study design

This section allows you to include the specifics of your methods and any key elements of study design. This will be dependent on the nature of your project but

please consider the following elements that are sometimes omitted from applications:

- This is a good place to ensure that any power calculations that underpin your study design have been included.
- If there are elements of the project that could be considered high-risk, please include any plans you have for mitigation: what alternative plans would you put in place to make sure the project succeeds?
- Make sure your study design aligns with the costings you have provided – do not leave out costings for any elements of the project.
- If your project is clinical, describe how you are including people with lived experience in the trial design.

Objectives, timescales and milestones

Please give us a list of objectives for your research. When doing so please ensure that **the objectives align perfectly with the ones you write in your plain English application**. It is important that the content of the scientific application and the plain English application do not differ.

In this section we also want you to detail the key milestones for your project. Expert reviewers and the research committee will review the milestones as part of the process of reviewing your proposal. In addition, should the project be funded, we will review progress of the project each year against these milestones before releasing the next year's funds. It is, therefore, crucial that your milestones are clear and achievable.

Please ensure that milestones and timelines for your project match the Gantt chart provided in the next section.

Gantt chart

Upload a clear and easily readable pdf version of a chart that shows the timelines and milestones as described in the section above. Planned Patient and Public Involvement and Engagement (PPIE) activities must also be clearly marked on the Gantt chart.

Next steps

If your project is successful, what would be the next steps taken by yourself or others to take this work forward? How will your project take us towards a

treatment or benefit for people living muscle-wasting conditions in the short or long term?

Detailed justification of financial support

Please help us to understand how your request for support breaks down. Costs should be broken down into three categories as follows:

1. Staff costs.
    - Please provide a justification for each position listed
    - The expected salary for each person on the grant and the percentage full-time equivalent (FTE). If FTE varies from year to year, please indicate and justify this.
    - Are there any increases in salary expected due to inflation alone. Please detail the percentage rise in salary each year.
2. Consumables
    - Please list likely types of consumables, approximate costs for categories of consumables and the year in which they are expected to be required (see also guidance on the Finance section below). Details of major consumables costs are also requested under the "finance" tab.
    - For clinical studies, applicants are expected to include costs relating to participant reimbursement (e.g., travel costs).
    - Requested animal research costs should be included in the total consumables budget.
3. Equipment
    - Give type and costings for any equipment and make it clear what element of the project the equipment is required for.

All requested costs must be accompanied by a justification. A list of ineligible/excluded costs is available below in the instructions for the Finance section.

Supplementary funding

Where required, please provide details of any supplementary funding in place to support this project. Please describe the value of any additional funding, the source of these funds, and what they will be used for. All supplementary funding should be accompanied by a letter of support. This can be uploaded via the supplementary information section below.

Citing and referencing published work

Citations: please ensure citations are clearly marked and separable when reading the text. Note that formatting does not carry over into the form.

References: Please use Vancouver referencing style (see here for guidance), but please expand author line to include up to 20 authors if the Principal Applicant, Co-Applicant(s) or collaborators are authors.

Supplementary information

Please use this section to upload supplementary information or data relevant to the grant proposal, e.g. figures, tables, timescales. Files must be in pdf format and clearly readable.

Finance section

Requested Budget

The Summary of Financial Support Requested table should include **all costs** being requested from Muscular Dystrophy UK for this project in each of the categories indicated. Please ensure that any requested costs for animal research are also included within the total consumables budget.

You can apply for any combination of salary and consumables. Nationally awarded salary increases will only be allowed if they have been provided for in the grant application. Reasonable allowance for such increases whether known, pending or anticipated must be included and justified in the grant application.

Costs may be included for work carried out on the project by co-applicants or collaborators based outside of the UK. However, the majority of funds must be used for work carried out by the Principal Applicant at the UK host institution.

The funding restrictions for this grant type are:

- Project grants: £100,000 per year
- Proof-of-principle grants: up to £30,000

Finance: Exclusions

- Salary for Principal Applicants will not be funded
- Travel costs can only be requested if the travel is an integral part of the project; this must be clearly demonstrated in the grant application.

- We do not cover the costs of attending scientific meetings or society membership and these should not be included in the application.
- We will not cover recruitment costs.
- We do not fund computer equipment or generic software unless integral to the project (for example, bioinformatics projects). Any requests for software costs must be clearly detailed and justified under the 'Detailed justification of financial support' section of the application.
- We do not cover maintenance costs for IT equipment. We do not fund equipment costs unless integral to the project. We expect laboratories to provide and maintain equipment for general use and only under specific circumstances where specialist equipment is required will we consider providing funding.
- Generally, we do not provide equipment maintenance costs. However, we *may* provide maintenance costs for equipment if (1) it is specific to the project, and (2) if without the requested funds the project would not proceed. If such funds are requested, please include them under "consumables" costs and provide a rationale for the requested funds in the "Detailed justification of financial support" section under "the proposal" tab.
- We will not cover publication costs.

Applicants are strongly advised to confirm with the Finance Office of their Institution that the amounts specified in their submission are accurate.

Excess treatment costs

For all clinical research that needs Health Research Authority (HRA) approval (refer to criteria for HRA approval), a Schedule of Events Costs Attribution Template (SoECAT) must be completed, approved and submitted with the grant application. If you meet these criteria, you must complete a SoECAT even if you do not think your research will involve excess treatment costs (ETCs). Only clinical research needs HRA approval.

You will need the assistance of a local AcoRD specialist to complete and approve the SoECAT form. There are different ways to contact an AcoRD specialist depending on where you are based in the UK:

- England: NIHR website
- Scotland: NHS Research Scotland website
- Wales: email research.fundingsupport@wales.nhs.uk
- Northern Ireland: HSC R&D division website

We strongly recommend that you contact your local AcoRD specialist as soon as you know you are planning a piece of clinical research, to allow sufficient time for completion and approval of SoECAT before the grant application deadline.

In order to create a SoECAT, you will need to create an account in the online NIHR Central Portfolio Management System (CPMS). Please refer to the NIHR RDN user guide for further guidance on creating an account. Once your account is created and active, you can complete an online SoECAT by selecting the 'Apply for a service for a new study' pathway. Further guidance can be found on the Online SoECAT guidance page.

Assistance with designing your research application is also available from the NIHR CRN and Research Design Service.

Once the form has been completed and authorized, please save the 'study information' and 'summary' page of the 'Funder Export' form as a single PDF and upload it with your application in the Finance section of the application form. If the final form cannot be completed prior to submission of the application, you must contact us at Researchgrants@musculardystrophyuk.org to explain the delay.

Please note that MDUK is a member of the Association of Medical Research Charities (AMRC). You may find more useful information on the AMRC website here.

Animal Research section

Please refer to the NC3Rs' ARRIVE guidelines when designing animal experiments and ensure you report animal-based studies in accordance with the ARRIVE guidelines. Grant holders are required to implement the principles found in the NC3Rs' guidance document, Responsibility in the use of Animals in Bioscience Research. For more information and guidance about the use of animals in research see the NC3Rs website.

If the research involves use of higher animals (cats, dogs, equines, pigs, non-human primates), the proposal will be sent to NC3Rs for specialist expert review. This will be in addition to the regular scientific expert reviews of the application. If non-human primates are being used, the grant holder must ensure compliance with the NC3Rs' Guidelines for Primate Accommodation, Care and Use.

Any costs associated with animal research should be fully detailed in the Animal Costs Details table and included under the consumables category in the Summary of Financial Support Requested table in the Finance tab.

When completing the Animal Costs Details table please note that the Summary Totals table will automatically update with the totals from the tables below. Tables for animal purchase costs, animal maintenance costs and experimental procedures costs are given for each year of the grant, **please use the '+' button to add values to each row as required**.

Muscular Dystrophy UK supports the Association of Medical Research Charities' statement on the use of animals in research – please also refer to our position statement on animal research.

Ethical Issues section

If the grant is awarded, it is the responsibility of the applicant to ensure that all necessary ethics approvals are in place **before** the start of the project. If you wish to activate the project before ethics approval is in place, please contact us at researchgrants@musculardystrophyuk.org to discuss the issue further. The grant will not be activated until the Research Team are satisfied that lack of ethics approval will not impede the project or influence timelines.

Intellectual Property section (including confidentiality)

Please refer to our Terms and Conditions for information about intellectual property and ensure that the conditions are met if the proposed research is likely to lead to patentable or commercially exploitable results.

We use information from your main application and your plain English application in order to fundraise and to communicate about the work we fund. **In order not to create a prior disclosure that would damage chances of commercial development, we need to understand what elements of your proposal must be kept strictly confidential.**

Details of your application are shared in confidence with expert reviewers, members of our Medical Research Committee and Lay Research Panel, the Board of Trustees, and when relevant, charitable trusts and other donors.

Application in plain English section

All grant applicants are required to complete an application in plain English which provides an overview of the proposed work. This will be assessed by Muscular Dystrophy UK's Lay Research Panel. The Panel does not receive the scientific application and therefore the plain English application should act as a stand-alone piece that should accurately reflect the content and objectives of the scientific application. The plain English application will initially be assessed by members of the Muscular Dystrophy UK Research Team, and you may be asked to make changes should the scientific application and the plain English application differ, or if the latter is too technical.

The Lay Research Panel meets and discusses all the applications and their relevance to and impact on people with a muscular dystrophy or related neuromuscular conditions. Their recommendations will be presented to the Medical Research Committee by two representatives of the Panel. These representatives will take part in the discussion and voting during the Medical Research Committee meeting. The information you provide in this form will therefore form a significant part of the awards process.

The members of the Lay Research Panel do not have a scientific background so please do not use scientific terminology or jargon. Please also refrain from including references to material that is not available to the general public. Avoid the use of abbreviations where possible. You may find it helpful to ask a non-scientist friend or relative to read this application prior to submission to check readability. Please visit the news section of our website to see the level of plain English we would expect you to use and refer to the guidance we have developed with the Lay Panel on writing your plain English application. The plain English application will be seen by members of the Lay Research Panel at an early stage during the application review process. You may be asked to make changes to your application to clarify its contents or to make it more readable. Failure to provide sufficient and understandable information in the plain English application could lead to rejection of the application.

The information contained in the plain English application will be treated as confidential. Further guidance on each section is given below. More useful resources and guidance to help you write your application in plain English can be found on the NIHR website.

Please write a very brief summary of your project in language suitable for non-scientists/non-clinicians

In 400 words or less, please write a summary of your project in language suitable for non-scientists/non-clinicians. This summary may be used to describe your research to external funders and, as described above, we share this data with the AMRC. If you consider the contents of the abstract to be sensitive, please add the word CONFIDENTIAL in upper case at the beginning of the summary.

Are you happy for MDUK to share this plain English abstract with the AMRC?

As a requirement of MDUK's membership of the Association of Medical Research Charities (AMRC), we share the plain English abstract as part of the AMRC's annual UK Health Research analysis. Please confirm if you are happy for us to share this abstract for this purpose.

If you consider the contents of the abstract to be sensitive, add the word CONFIDENTIAL in upper case at the beginning of the abstract. However, we would encourage you to consider whether proprietary information needs to be included in this section.

In your proposal what question are you asking and why is it an important question to address?

What is the question your proposal asks and how is it relevant to the field of research into muscle wasting conditions? You may need to consider what background information you want to include to ensure the Lay Research Panel understands the purpose of your application. Some background on the condition itself may be useful. In addition please quote incidence/prevalence data if available. Are you addressing a rare disease or a relatively common one?

What other research has previously been done in this area?

Provide information about other research that may be important to support your proposal. Given the context of other research in this area, tell us what is new about your proposal. How does it build on previous work?

How will your project be carried out?

We do not want a detailed experimental plan, but we do want some simple details of methodology

Clinical studies: explain how your study will work. What protocols, diagnostics, imaging, etc. will participants undergo? How many participants will be involved and how will they be recruited? How often will participants visit the clinic? What geographical areas will participants be drawn from? Outline any challenges you think participants may encounter and how you will overcome these. The Lay Research Panel is made up of people with lived experience of muscle wasting conditions and will be looking at how well your study considers the challenges faced by participants. For clinical projects we will ask you a little more detail below about the impact your research has on participants and how people might be involved in your research. You may want to think about how this section links with those questions.

For laboratory-based projects: We need to understand what types of method you will be using. Why is it important to use this methodology? Does your application use animal or other models? Explain why that is important. If you are using drugs or treatments in vivo or in vitro explain how the drugs work and how they are to be tested.

What are the aims and objectives of this project?

State as simply as possible what you hope your research will achieve by the end of this project. Answers to this question should align with the "Objectives, timescales and milestones" question under the Proposal tab. We are not asking you to speculate about the long-term effects of your research. We will ask you about that below.

Graphical abstract

This is an optional section of the form. We encourage you to think about a supporting diagram that might help the Lay Research Panel to understand your research.

What impact will this project have on the research field and people affected by muscle wasting conditions?

Give examples of how the field will be impacted. For example, will this advance understanding of muscle biology or mechanisms of disease? Will it result in a potential treatment for a muscle wasting condition? Do you consider that this research will benefit people with muscle wasting conditions in the short or long term? If so how?

If your project is successful what would be the next steps taken by yourself or others?

Building on the last question where will your research go after this project?

Explain how you think your application fits with MDUK's strategic aims

The strategic aims of the charity can be found here and our research strategy can be found here. We are particularly interested in supporting early-career researchers (ECRs). If you are an ECR explain how this funding will support your career development.

Comment on how your team is best placed to do this work and how you may be supported by any collaborators.

Explain why you and your team are well placed to do this research and what experience you have that supports this. Comment on how that is supplemented by any collaborations you have included in the scientific application.

Is this a resubmission of an application previously submitted to Muscular Dystrophy UK?

In this question we want to understand whether you have submitted this application (or a very similar application) to MDUK before. The Lay Research Panel need to understand why/how this application is different from your previous application. If you took Lay Panel or other feedback into account please include a brief summary in your account.

Please explain how the funds will be used

The Lay Research Panel will be able to see the table of requested funds that you completed in the main application. There is no need for a detailed breakdown, but please provide a broad description of how the funds will be used. For example, how many people will be employed on the project? Are funds going towards specialised models or equipment that are very expensive? If so give a brief outline of how those funds are to be used. You may want to link the detail in this section with your answer to the question "How will your project be carried out?".

Will people with muscle wasting conditions be participants in your research or will they be otherwise involved?

Is this clinical research that will either use human participants and/or that will seek advice from people with lived experience in the design or oversight of your research?

If you answer yes to this question two further questions will appear (see next two questions).

Give details of how people with lived conditions have been involved in your research

This question appears if you answered yes to the question "Will people with muscle wasting conditions be participants in your research or will they be otherwise involved?"

Have people with muscle wasting conditions been involved in the design of your research study? Do you plan to include people with muscle wasting conditions in a steering group or other oversight for your study? Do you intend to include people with muscle wasting conditions in any other way? Are any of these people reimbursed for their time or expenses? Note that there are separate questions relating to study participants and public engagement below, so please do not include participation or engagement activities here.

We support the AMRC's position statement on public and patient involvement in research.

Give details of how you have considered the potential impact of the study on participants

This question appears if you answered yes to the question "Will people with muscle wasting conditions be participants in your research or will they be otherwise involved?"

Please consider possible negative impacts on the participants in the study and what steps you have taken to overcome them. The following are some things for you to consider. How invasive are the protocols suggested in your application and have you considered alternatives? Has thought been given to how far participants must travel and/or how tiring this could be for participants? In developing the study protocol have you taken into account any challenging aspects of the protocol for participants? For example, how many visits will the participants make to a study site or will visits be combined with regular follow-up at clinics? Do you think the study protocol is practically achievable for people with the condition you are studying? You may want to consider whether participants are reimbursed for travel costs or other relevant expenses. Are those costs included in the application?

How will you engage and share your research with people affected by muscle wasting conditions?

Much of the funding for Muscular Dystrophy UK's research programme comes from families and supporters of the charity. Please explain how you will engage people whose lives are affected, either directly or indirectly, by muscle wasting conditions during the course of your project. Do you or your institution plan to disseminate results/outcomes of your project to the public?

Is there any other information you would like to add that is not covered by the questions above?

This question is not mandatory. The field is available to you to add any detail that you feel was not covered in any of the questions above.

Supporting Documentation section

This section can be used for uploading additional documents that are relevant to your application, e.g. a letter of support from someone who is not a co-applicant or collaborator. Files must be in pdf format.

Further information section

Please indicate in this section if you would like to receive further correspondence from Muscular Dystrophy UK. GDPR requires that we have approval to keep your details for a specific purpose. For research and other mailings we may keep your details indefinitely for the purposes to which you agree. You can ask for your details to be removed at any time by contacting researchgrants@musculardystrophyuk.org.

Application Review section

All applications are sent for external expert review prior to being reviewed by our Medical Research Committee. We would like you to suggest three reviewers to review your application. These reviewers should be **independent** experts who you or your co-applicant(s) have not published with in the past three years and who do not work at the same institute/university as any of the applicants. Please give their full names, the institutes at which they are based, their email addresses and a justification of why they are suitable to review your application.

Departmental Support section

This section *cannot* be completed online.

After submitting your application you will receive a pdf version of the application by email. Please send a copy of the signed form to researchgrants@musculardystrophyuk.org.

a. We prefer that you scan wet signatures, but we understand that this is not always possible and will accept electronic signatures when necessary.
b. If the size of the scanned document is problematic, we will accept the signature page only, provided you annotate the page with the grant reference

The application must be signed by

- Your Head of Department in which the proposed research and training will be carried out, or an appropriate signatory e.g. Dean, if the applicant is Head of Department.
- The principal investigator
- An authorised member of your Research Office/Finance department

Please email the signed electronic copy of the application to researchgrants@musculardystrophyuk.org *within three weeks* of the deadline for the call.

What happens after submission?

Milestones for the selection process of your grant application are given below; *please note the dates given are approximate and for guidance only*. Find out more about the assessment process on our website. You will be contacted by email when your applicant response is due, or if there are any other actions you need to take; these will all be done via your online account.

Milestone	**Date**
Lay Research Panel read the plain English application. Changes will be requested if it is too technical.	February-March
You will be invited to respond to the expert reviewers' comments.	Late March – Mid-April
Applications triaged. Members of the Medical Research Committee and Lay Research Panel will review the applications. Shortlisted applications will be taken forward for further consideration.	April-May
The plain English application will be discussed at the meeting of our Lay Research Panel. Separately, the scientific application, together with its reviews and your responses to them, will be discussed at the annual meeting of our Medical	June

Research Committee. Both groups will score the applications, and the final recommendation about which proposals are fundable will be made at the Medical Research Committee meeting, with input from the Lay Research Panel.	
Notification of outcome- you will be notified of the outcome of your application after our Finance Committee/Board of Trustees has met to make the final decision.	Mid-July
Formal outcome letter - you will receive a formal letter (by email) with the outcome of your application and feedback from the Medical Research Committee and Lay Research Panel.	Late July/early August

The decision-making process

Grant applications will be reviewed by members of Muscular Dystrophy UK staff to ensure eligibility, and that the proposal fits the remit of the call. Applications will then be sent to at least 3 reviewers who will be selected from the international research community, based on their relevant research experience and ability to comment on the proposal. Applicants will be given the opportunity to respond to reviews.

The application will be considered by our Medical Research Committee and our Lay Research Panel. The panels will score applications and only applications that meet the minimum quality threshold will be considered for funding. The Medical Research Committee will make a recommendation to the Board of Trustees and applicants will receive a decision letter in late July 2025.

Criteria for external expert review

All reviewers are screened by our research team to ensure they do not have conflicts of interest (as defined by our Expert Reviewers' terms of reference). At minimum reviewers must not

- Have published with the applicant or co-applicants in the last three years
- Be working at the same research institute as the applicant or co-applicants

Reviewers are asked to confirm that they do not have any conflicts of interest before they can proceed to a review.

As part of their review, external experts are asked:

- To identify any potential weaknesses in an application
- To comment on the relevance and accuracy of the background given
- Whether objectives of the project can realistically be met within the project timeframe and with the resources listed in the application
- Whether the requested funds are justified
- To assess the methodology
- To comment on the originality/uniqueness of the application
- To comment on the standing of the applicant in this field
- To comment on regulatory and ethical elements of the application
- To rank the application within their personal experience of reviewing other applications

Scoring of applications by committees

The reviewing committee scores applications between 1 and 6 where scores of 4-6 are fundable.

A fundable score is given where the consensus of external review and opinion of the committee is that the application: is original and innovative with strong/excellent leadership; will answer key/crucial scientific questions or address a gap in knowledge; will have potential for impact and will constitute excellent value for money. Moreover, a strong application in plain English will contribute towards a good score.

Applications in the non-fundable range (score 1-3) may contain elements of a fundable application but the committee, with support from expert review comments, may identify issues with the leadership team, methodological flaws or under-resourcing/poor value for money of the project. The committee may consider the project unlikely to deliver a successful outcome. A poorly written plain English application may negatively influence the final score.

All applicants will be given feedback with which resubmitted applications may be improved.

Awards and terms and conditions

Successful applicants will receive

- An outcome letter containing feedback from the committees
- An award letter containing financial details of the award, any exclusions or changes to the award and may contain special terms and conditions specific to the award
- A copy of the current terms and conditions

If you have any questions, please contact the Research Team at researchgrants@musculardystrophyuk.org.