

## Peer Review Procedures

Meningitis Research Foundation undertakes structured peer review of research applications submitted for funding. This process fulfils the Association of Medical Research Charities' (AMRC) rigorous peer review principles and those of the Irish Medical Research Charities Group.

### 1. Application & Deadline

Each grant round starts with a public call for applications, and applicants have a minimum of 8 weeks to submit their research proposal. During this time, our Research Team is available to answer questions and guide applicants on eligibility and scope of the open grant call.

### 2. Eligibility

After the deadline, the Research Team conducts an initial check on all applications for eligibility and conflicts of interest with our Scientific Advisory Panel. Any issues are resolved before moving to review.

### 3. Standard Review Process

Applications are assigned to reviewers on our Scientific and Lived Experience Advisory Panels based on expertise and conflict-of-interest checks.

Every application is reviewed by:

1. At least two Scientific Advisers to evaluate quality and feasibility.
2. At least one Lived Experience Advisor to evaluate relevance and real-world impact.

Reviewers score applications against clear criteria, such as:

- Relevance and clinical benefit
- Scientific design and methodology
- Originality
- Feasibility of achieving objectives, including within the proposed timeframe
- Ethical considerations and cost realism
- Appropriate inclusion of people with experience of meningitis

Criteria may change for each research grant round. The exact evaluation criteria for each research grant round are published on the Meningitis Research Foundation website.

### 4. Additional Review Process

For larger grants, discretionary awards considered outside the research grant round, or where several conflicts exist within the Scientific Advisory Panel, additional experts may be contacted to provide peer review. These are experts that do not sit on our Scientific Advisory Panel but who are asked to offer their time to support the review process. These reviewers follow the same process to provide written feedback, scores, and recommendations on research applications.

## 5. Conflict of Interest

All peer reviewers and Meningitis Research Foundation staff must declare any actual, potential or perceived conflicts of interest. There are two levels of conflict of interest: **full conflict** and **limited conflict**.

A). Reviewers are defined as **fully conflicted** on the following application types:

- their own application
- where they are listed as a co-applicant or collaborator
- where applicants are from the same department
- involving individuals they have supervised, managed, or closely collaborated with within the last 3 years
- where they have a personal relationship with the applicants
- where they have a financial interest
- where they feel they have or would appear to have a significant conflict of interest

Reviewers with a **full conflict** do not receive any documents pertaining to the conflicted application, they must leave the room for the discussion of that application, they do not receive minutes for that discussion, and they do not score that application.

B). Reviewers are defined as **limited conflict** on the following application types:

- where applicants are from the same organization but a different department
- where they have a minor collaboration more than 3 years ago

Reviewers with a limited conflict do not receive any documents pertaining to the conflicted application and they do not score that application, but they may remain in the room for the discussion and answer any factual questions posed by the other panel members.

## 6. Panel Meeting & Decision

After individual reviews are submitted, all panel members meet to discuss the applications in detail.

The panel collectively evaluates the application against agreed criteria, considering both scientific merit and input from Lived Experience Advisors. This ensures decisions reflect both technical quality and real-world relevance. Applications are ranked based on overall scores, reviewer comments, and alignment with the grant call's priorities.

The panel's recommendations are documented and forwarded to the Foundation's Trustees. Who make the final funding decisions.

## 7. Ongoing Monitoring

Funded projects are monitored through progress and final reports. Lead reviewers provide feedback throughout the project lifecycle.