

MND Scotland Ignite ECR Competition Guidance Document

Thank you for considering taking part in the MND Scotland Ignite ECR competition. In striving to 'make time count' for people affected by MND, it is important that we only fund the best research. We are also mindful of your time, so please read the guidance information contained on this front page and in the appendices before proceeding.

MND is a progressive, life-shortening illness, which arises from the death of motor neurons. The subsequent weakening of muscles leads to a loss of ability to walk, talk, eat and, eventually, breathe. In the UK, 1 in 300 people will die from MND and there is currently no cure or effective treatment available. Average life expectancy following diagnosis is just 18 months. MND Scotland is committed to 'making time count' for people affected by MND and our core [strategic goals](#) include working to enable transformation in MND research and invest in research to improve the lives of or change the future for people with MND.

About our Ignite ECR competition

This competition is designed to encourage early career researchers to embark on their own small scale research projects in MND. For example, this may be investigating pre-existing data available to researchers from a new angle, basic research, creating a prototype of a piece of care equipment, or interviewing people affected by MND to create an improved care plan or guidance.

How many prizes are there?

There will be up to five initial prizes winners at the first stage of the competition. At the second stage, one final winner will be selected from the initial five.

How much is the prize?

The initial, up to five, winners will receive a prize of £2,000 **to be spent on the work outlined in their application.**

One final winner, selected from the initial prize winners, will be awarded an additional £10,000 to carry out the further work outlined in their final report.

Please note this application is for one of the initial awards of a £2,000 prize.

How long are the projects?

The projects to be carried out with the £2,000 prize **must** be completed, and final reports must be submitted within 9 months of award. This includes a section on how they would develop this work if they were awarded £10,000. Each £2,000 winner will also be asked to create a poster to present at an MND Scotland Ignite ECR competition poster session to the awarding panel.

Founders: John and Peigi Macleod Royal Patron: HRH The Princess Royal

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Scottish Charity no. SC002662. Company limited by guarantee, registered in Scotland no. SC217735

Form last reviewed: May 2026

The winner of the £10,000 will have 12 months from the date of award to complete their project with a further 3 months provided to complete their final report.

What type of projects are we looking for?

The Ignite competition should be thought of as an opportunity to spark creativity and imagination. We want applicants to be inventive in how they plan to use the £2,000 prize, no matter what the area of MND research, or techniques being used. You may decide to use the award to help prove a hypothesis, design equipment, investigate a completely new, thinking outside the box, idea, or something completely different. We encourage applications from all areas of MND research, some things you may think about include (but are not limited to):

- Contributing to a stage of the basic science research pathway
- Utilising underused data resources
- Improving care
- Finding ways to improve a person's quality of life
- Finding ways to tackle a problem faced by people with MND
- Interviewing people affected by MND
- Utilising new technologies
- Making use of AI
- Novel equipment ideas that could help people with MND
- Generating new pilot data or information
- Looking at existing research from a new angle
- Making use of tissue banks
- Improving services for people affected by MND

Am I eligible?

Applicants must be UK based (e.g. studying/working at a UK research institute, within a UK NHS health board, or company)

Applicants must be an ECR as defined by not holding a PhD at the time of application or being less than ten years post PhD award at the time of application.

It is not required to have your lab supervisor as a co-applicant on the project. However, having their support both for advice and providing time and lab space would be helpful.

To be eligible for the £10,000 award applicants **must** complete their £2,000 project and submit their final report within the 9 months, and present at the poster session.

When does the competition open?

The competition will open on 01 August 2026 and the **deadline for applications is 31 October 2026**.

How do I apply?

Please complete the application form available on our website and email it to research@mndscotland.org.uk. You can also send an email to this address if you would like to discuss your application in advance of submission.

How will the prize be awarded?

If the funds won are to be used, as outlined in your application, to pay for resources which must be accessed/paid for via your University/NHS Board/Company (e.g. access to data, antibodies and kits etc.), you must organise with your finance department for them to receive the prize on your behalf and set up a temporary grant code for you to use the funds.

If the funds won are to be used, as outlined in your application, to pay for something such as travel costs to interview people affected by MND, the prize may be paid directly to you.

Please note, in both cases we will require a list of all transactions attributed to the awarded prize. You can contact us at research@mndscotland.org.uk if you would like advice on this.

Anything else I need to know?

If your research proposal requires input from people affected by MND, your application must be accompanied by a completed 'Involving People in Research' form. This will allow us to assess what support and assistance MND Scotland can provide you.

What We Need From You

In addition to completion of the content on the following pages, applicants must also provide the following supplementary materials, where relevant:

- Supporting letters from supervisor/co-applicants/collaborators (if relevant)
- Intellectual property agreements (if relevant)
- Valid copy of ethical approval (if relevant/available)
- [Involving People in Research request form](#) (if relevant)

Further Information

You can learn more about our current research portfolio [here](#).

MND Scotland's Privacy Policy can be found [here](#).

How applications will be assessed

All applications are subjected to rigorous review. Application materials are initially screened by MND Scotland's Research Team to ensure the applicant and application meets eligibility criteria.

The application will be reviewed at panel by the MND Scotland Scientific Advisory Panel (SAP) using a scoring system. The highest scoring applications will proceed to the MND Scotland Board of Trustees (BOT), who will ratify the SAP decision on who will be awarded a £2,000 prize. If similarly scoring applications are being considered, priority will be given to an applicant who is working in a Scottish University, health board or company.

MND Scotland endeavours to inform applicants as to the outcome of their submission around 12 weeks after the application deadline on 31 Oct 2026. Due to the nature of the peer review process, this may not always be possible. This is particularly the case for research which is expected to translate into clinical practice, where specialist peer-reviewers may be brought in.

To facilitate the review process, we will ask you for five key research keywords/phrases that best describe the application content.

Assessment criteria for your application will focus on scientific quality and likelihood of impact. In addition, the value for money, the quality of the learning, training and career development opportunities will be taken into consideration.