The National Multiple Sclerosis Society is committed to being a driving force of MS research and treatment to stop disease progression, restore function, and end MS forever.

As part of its commitment to addressing the needs of individuals affected by progressive forms of MS, the Society invites proposals from commercial organizations to establish research partnerships with Fast Forward, LLC to accelerate and support development of therapeutic strategies for protecting the nervous system from damage (neuroprotection) and ways to repair the nervous system to restore function.

**Summary**

The purpose of this request for proposals (RFP) is to fund and facilitate translation of important research findings and accelerate new drug candidates in neuroprotection and repair to enable clinical evaluation. Participants will be selected to enter this competitive process based on their alignment with the goals of this funding round. If selected, applicants will be provided with a template for completing the application and a set of document requests to enable Fast Forward to conduct a due diligence and a review of the opportunity. Complete applications will undergo review by a panel comprised of National MS Society staff as well as external research and business advisors.

**Priority areas for this program include but are not limited to:**

- Advancement of novel targets and drug candidates that provide neuroprotection and/or facilitate remyelination without impacting the adaptive immune response.

- Therapeutic approaches that don’t rely on a disrupted blood brain barrier to achieve drug exposure.

- Novel targets and drug candidates with preclinical evidence for neuroprotection and/or repair in a treatment paradigm.

- Therapeutic approaches addressing targets associated with MS pathophysiology.

**Funding components may include but are not limited to:**

- Assay development and compound library screens

- Lead optimization efforts to produce candidates suitable for preclinical development
• Testing of candidate compounds in relevant animal models for preclinical proof of concept
• Supporting translational biology studies
• Candidate selectivity profiling
• Efforts to identify potential target engagement and/or pharmacodynamic biomarkers
• ADME and toxicology
• Compound scale up and formulation work
• Preparation for IND filing
• Early clinical development
• Intellectual property development

Collaborations:
Academic/Industry collaboration proposals are encouraged from submitting companies.

Mechanisms of support:
Fast Forward provides funding to U.S. and non-U.S. commercial organizations. **Funding to not-for-profit research institutions will be considered if a majority of the work is conducted at reputable Contract Research Organizations with appropriate expertise relevant to the proposed work.** Funding averages $500,000 and must be justified based on the scientific and development work plan. For large programs or clinical trials where the true cost may exceed the overall program budget limitations, Fast Forward requires co-funding with another funding agency or funding in syndicate with other investors.

Submission guidelines:
Inquiries with Fast Forward staff are strongly suggested in order to determine alignment of a proposal with Fast Forward’s priorities prior to due diligence. Submission of a preliminary application will be required. Only those programs found to have suitable scientific merit and commercial development feasibility will be invited to submit a full proposal. Companies invited to submit a full proposal will have until **February 29th, 2016** to submit all documents required. Proposals are to be submitted through the National MS Society’s online grantee portal ApplyOnline. All proposal information, including instructions for accessing ApplyOnline, can be found at [http://www.nationalmssociety.org/For-Professionals/Researchers/Society-Funding/Commercial-Research-Funding](http://www.nationalmssociety.org/For-Professionals/Researchers/Society-Funding/Commercial-Research-Funding).

Review:
Companies will undergo full evaluation by Fast Forward’s Scientific and Business Advisory Committee (SBAC) and only selected companies will advance to the next stage to participate by teleconference with the Fast Forward SBAC for a presentation in March/April 2016.

Fast Forward will review proposals/companies on the basis of the following criteria:
A. Scientific Considerations:

- **Rationale**: Does the proposal address an important aspect of the RFP and does it have compelling commercial potential to lead to a marketable product?
- **Innovation**: Does the project challenge existing paradigms or clinical practice or address an innovative hypothesis, novel target or critical barrier to progress in the field? Does the project develop or employ novel concepts, approaches, methodologies, tools or technologies for this area? Does the proposal address an unmet medical need?
- **Research Team**: Are the lead investigator and collaborators qualified and well-suited to carry out the proposed research program?
- **Scientific Plan**: Is the research plan sufficiently developed and appropriate to the project? Are the specific aims clearly defined? Are milestones and go/no go decision points clearly articulated? Are the milestones and timeline realistic? Does the research plan contain the appropriate translational elements to meet the applicant’s objectives?
- **Environment**: Is the research environment appropriate and likely to contribute to the success of the proposed research program? Does the environment foster collaborative arrangements that may support the proposed research activities? Is the research environment compliant with appropriate rules and regulations for conducting animal studies?
- **Budget**: Is the proposed budget reasonable and justified relative to the proposed research?

B. Commercial Considerations:

- Commercial Feasibility: Does the proposal define a potential path from lab to clinic? What are key milestones that would support the proposed path?
- Therapeutic Strategy (if applicable): Does the proposed therapeutic approach address unmet needs relative to existing alternatives/therapies for treatment of MS? Is the strategy feasible and appropriate to MS?
- Development Potential: Is there a development path that enables the drug candidate to advance through preclinical and/or clinical development?
- Intellectual Property: Has the applicant secured intellectual property? If not, is it in the process of securing its intellectual property?
- Funding by Third Parties: Has the proposed program been funded by other parties? Will other parties contribute to funding this proposal?

Companies that do not advance to the next stage of the review process and that are not selected for funding will receive a summary of comments provided by the Fast Forward SBAC.

**Funding Decisions:**
All recommendations of the Fast Forward SBAC are final. Funding decisions will be made by the Fast Forward Board of Managers and will be based on the recommendations of Fast Forward’s SBAC. Companies will be notified of final funding recommendations in summer 2016. Each award will be provided pursuant to a Sponsored Research Agreement between recipients and Fast Forward and anticipated funding would begin shortly thereafter. Applicants who are selected for funding will be
provided with a collaboration agreement covering project support through Fast Forward and terms of revenue sharing.

**Inquiries:**
Companies are encouraged to contact Fast Forward for clarification of any issues or questions regarding this invitation.

Please direct inquiries to Maya Merrell, Director, Business and Partnership Development at maya.merrell@fastforward.org, or at 212-476-0443.

Proposals will be accepted from **January 15th through February 29th, 2016.**