

The Marilyn Hilton Award for Innovation in MS Research Request for Proposals

Conrad N. Hilton Foundation

Established in 1944 by the founder of Hilton Hotels, the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation works to improve the lives of disadvantaged and vulnerable people throughout the world. The Foundation funds Multiple Sclerosis (MS) research and patient services through its Overcoming Multiple Sclerosis Major Program area. Since the Foundation's inception, it has awarded over \$18 million in grants in the hopes of finding a cure for those with MS and improving the lives of people living with the disease. Continuing with its long-term commitment to support MS research, the Foundation is launching a new competitive peer-reviewed grant award designed to fund MS research.

More information about the Foundation and its programs can be found on our [website](#).

Multiple Sclerosis Program Goal

The goal of the Marilyn Hilton Award for Innovation in MS Research is to stimulate innovation and advance knowledge that will aid in developing treatments and cures for progressive forms of MS.

The Foundation envisions the Marilyn Hilton Award for Innovation in MS Research as the centerpiece of its MS research funding. The goal is to stimulate innovative and potentially paradigm-shifting research on Progressive MS, which may otherwise go unfunded in times of fiscal restraint. Per our funding guidelines, the Foundation is particularly interested in supporting projects that address the development of biomarkers for Progressive MS; other areas that could impact the field, such as new animal models, surveillance systems or investment into possible new therapeutics for Progressive MS; and the encouragement of young researchers into the field. At this time, the Foundation is particularly interested in the discovery of biomarkers for Progressive MS.

Deadlines

- Pre-proposal Invitation Issued: June 16, 2014
- Pre-proposals Due: July 28, 2014
- Full Proposal Invitations: August 15, 2014
- Full Proposals Due: September 24, 2014
- Anticipated Award Announcement: November 2014
- Anticipated Funding: December 2014

Background and Rationale

In the last decade, a number of therapies for Relapsing-Remitting MS have emerged, and the number of therapeutics under development continues to grow. However, no therapies yet exist targeted at Primary or Secondary Progressive MS. A lack of biomarkers that can diagnose the disease early, assess its progression and provide a meaningful end-point for testing new therapeutics has hampered research on Progressive MS and development of meaningful therapeutics. Biomarker discovery specific to the Progressive forms of MS is essential to developing future treatments and supporting clinical trials. Biomarkers will not only improve and speed treatment discovery, but would also mean better patient care and disease management.

Purpose

The Foundation seeks to support potentially high-risk/high-reward projects with the potential to significantly expand our understanding of Progressive MS. The goal of this funding cycle of the Marilyn Hilton Award for Innovation in MS Research is to fund innovative research designed to seed a breakthrough discovery in the search for biomarkers for Progressive MS. Research designed to provide a mechanistic understanding of the determinants of Progressive MS is also encouraged. Exploratory research, with little to no preliminary data, but with a highly compelling hypothetical rationale may be submitted for review. The Foundation will give special consideration to investigators at the beginning of their careers.

Funding Available

Depending on the availability of funds and the quality of the proposals that are received, the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation expects to commit up to \$6 million in grant funding to be distributed over a four-year period, with the intention of supporting multiple awards. For this funding cycle, the Marilyn Hilton Award for Innovation in MS Research will support grants of up to four-years, totaling no more than \$900,000 over the grant period. Individual years should average roughly \$250,000. Prior to the end of the grant, the Foundation may extend the investigator the opportunity to apply for another round of funding. The Foundation will extend the opportunity based upon progress the investigator has made towards reaching determined benchmarks and results at the two or three-year mark (dependent upon the length of the grant).

No more than 15 percent may go to indirect costs. Grants will be made to the Institution on behalf of the award recipient.

Eligibility Requirements

- ***Institutions Eligible to Participate:*** Because the Foundation is seeking to seed innovation, any institution with American non-profit status or equivalent is invited to apply. However, only one proposal will be considered from each institution.
- ***Principal Investigator(s):*** The Foundation will consider pre-proposals from full-time employees of eligible institutions. Because only one pre-proposal will be accepted for consideration from any institution, investigators interested in submitting a pre-proposal are strongly encouraged to check with their institution before submission to the Foundation. Pre-proposals will require a letter of support from the Department Chair, Dean of Research, or person in a comparable leadership position at their institution.

Selection Process

- ***Pre-proposal:*** Institutions are allowed to submit one proposal. Based on ratings given by the Advisory Committee, a subset of these proposals will be invited to submit full proposals. The Foundation will notify all pre-proposal applicants whether they have been chosen to submit a full proposal by August 15, 2014.
- ***Proposals:*** Based on the Advisory Committee's recommendations, a subset of the pre-proposals will be invited to submit full proposals. The Foundation expects to award four or five proposals with a grant during this cycle. The Foundation will notify all applicants whether they have been awarded a grant by November 2014.
- ***Selection Criteria:***
 - **Innovation** - Does the application challenge and seek to shift current research or clinical practice paradigms in Progressive MS by utilizing novel theoretical concepts, approaches or methodologies, instrumentation, or interventions?

- **Significance and Potential for Impact**—Does the project address an important problem or a barrier to progress in the field? How will successful completion of the aims change the concepts, methods, technologies, treatments, services, or preventive interventions that drive this field?
- **Approach**—Are the overall strategy, methodology, and analyses well-reasoned and appropriate to accomplish the specific aims of the project? Are potential problems, alternative strategies, and benchmarks for success presented? If the project is in the early stages of development, will the strategy establish feasibility and how will particularly risky aspects be managed? Are the benchmarks of success and criteria for evaluation appropriate? If the project includes clinical research, are the plans for protection of human subjects well considered?
- **Investigator**—Are the PIs and collaborators well suited to the project? If Early Stage Investigators or New Investigators, do they have appropriate experience and training?
- **Environment**—Will the scientific environment in which the work will be done contribute to the probability of success: Are the Institutional support, equipment and other physical resources available to the investigators adequate for the project proposed?
- **Budget** – Is it likely that the project will be completed in the time proposed for the amount requested?
- **Advisory Committee:** An Advisory Committee of MS researchers will advise the Foundation in its decision making process. In certain cases, the Foundation may bring in additional reviewers.
 - **Dr. Stephen Hauser** – Chair, Department of Neurology, UC San Francisco
 - **Dr. Daniel Reich** – Chief, Translational Neuroradiology Unit, National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke
 - **Dr. Henry McFarland** – Chief, Neuroimmunology Branch, National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke (retired)

The Marilyn Hilton Award for Innovation in MS Research

PRE-PROPOSAL INSTRUCTIONS

Please review the instructions before submission of pre-proposal. The Conrad N. Hilton Foundation staff and scientific peer review committee will treat all applications with confidentiality.

Submission Instructions:

- Please submit pre-proposals to this email address: MS_Program@hiltonfoundation.org. Please title submission in this manner: Investigator Name.Institution Name.ProjectName.Date.
- Each proposal should include the following:
 - Cover Page (template included)
 - NIH style biography with list of publications for all investigators
 - Scientific Narrative of no more than two pages (template included)
 - Short letter of support (no more than one page) from the home institution

Cover Page:

- The cover page includes general contact information about the investigator and institution, including contact information and the institution's tax id number.
- The cover page also includes very general project and budget information.
- Cover page template is on page 7.

Scientific Narrative

- The Scientific Narrative should be no more than two pages.
- The Scientific Narrative should be in 12-Point Times - New Roman font.
- The Scientific Narrative should address the following components/questions:
 - The Idea
 - How would successful testing of this idea lead to a breakthrough in the understanding and/or treatment of MS?
 - What makes this idea particularly innovative?
 - The Hypothesis and Objective
 - A short and concise statement of the specific hypothesis to be tested or objective to be reached within the project period.
 - The Study
 - Describe the specific study (ies) to be performed over the project period to directly address the stated hypothesis/objective.
 - Please ensure that enough detail is included so that extensive external sources of information are not required to understand the proposed work.
 - Impact
 - How will successful completion of this study determine whether continued research on the proposed idea is justified?
 - What specific success criteria/benchmarks can serve to determine if next steps are warranted?

Frequently Asked Questions

Areas of Research

- *Does the Foundation have a preference regarding a type of biomarker?*
Other than potential for impact on Progressive MS, the Foundation does not have a preconceived preference on the type of biomarker submitted to the review team. Proposed work on biomarkers may be in the molecular, imaging, or neurophysical areas. Preference will be given towards research that would lead to replicable outcomes that may be useful in development of treatments for MS.
- *Is the Foundation willing to consider funding research that is not focused on biomarkers, but explores another aspect of research on Progressive MS?*
Yes, while developing biomarkers is a special focus of this RFP, the foundation is willing to consider other proposals for funding if they have the potential to illuminate the biology of Progressive MS and/or could lead to treatment, prevention, repair, or cure.
- *Is the Foundation willing to consider both basic research proposals as well as translation/clinical research proposals?*
Yes, as long as the proposal has a clear relevance to achieving the goal of this program, which is **“to stimulate innovation and advance knowledge that will aid in developing treatments and cures for progressive forms of MS.”**

Applicant Eligibility

- *Can a pre-proposal be submitted by more than one investigator working together?*
Yes, the Foundation encourages teams (either pairs or triads of investigators) to apply if there is a compelling and clearly explained scientific rationale for involvement of each investigator. The Foundation realizes that innovation often occurs at the intersections of disciplines.
- *Can two institutions (or more) submit a joint pre-proposal?*
Yes, the Foundation encourages collaboration between institutions and departments. However, one institution and one investigator must take the lead, and the pre-proposal will count as the institution’s single submission. This institution will hold responsibility for the grant – signature of grant contract, reporting requirements, etc.
- *Will the Foundation consider proposals from investigators working outside the area of MS?*
Yes, the Foundation recognizes that breakthroughs often occur at the intersection of disciplines and when investigators from outside a field apply their insights and unique expertise to a new area.
- *What does special consideration to young investigators mean?*
The Foundation wishes to support and encourage promising young investigators to enter and stay in the field of MS research. To that end, the Foundation encourages investigators at the beginning of their careers to apply.

- *Will the Foundation only fund investigators who are United States citizens?*
The Foundation funds the institutions for whom the investigators work. As long as the applications are submitted by United States non-profit entities, the investigators need not be United States citizens.
- *May an institution that already has a grant with the Foundation apply for funding?*
Yes. The Foundation will accept pre-proposals from institutions that may currently have a grant. However, principal investigators who have current research funding from the Foundation may not submit a pre-proposal.

Budget Questions

- *What is the largest grant amount the Foundation will fund?*
The Foundation will consider grant proposals totaling up to \$900,000, inclusive of direct and indirect costs. This amount is not intended to signal an amount to be requested in the pre-proposal, but to provide guidance on the upper limit of what is available for funding. Grants will be made for up to a four-year term.
- *What does an average of \$250,000 per year mean?*
Generally, investigators should propose projects that can be accomplished with roughly \$250,000 per year in funding. If a project exceeds \$250,000 per year, the cost should be well-justified by the investigator. Costs per year may not exceed \$400,000, and the total project cost may not exceed \$900,000
- *May an investigator submit a pre-proposal if the project already has funding?*
While the Foundation would prefer to fund projects exploring novel concepts, it may consider funding a project with pre-existing funding. In such a case, the investigator must clearly discuss what portions of the project have already received funding and how Foundation funding will further the science in a way not possible with existing funds.
- *What are acceptable indirect costs?*
Indirect costs may be no more than 15 percent of the total grant budget.
- *Should a detailed budget and timeline for the work be included in the pre-proposal?*
No, but sufficient information needs to be included in the two-page research description for the Advisory Committee to decide if it is feasible to complete the proposed work in a 4-year period.
- *Will this grant be considered a grant or a gift?*
The Foundation considers this a grant as we will require reporting and other requirements not consistent with gift terms.
- *Will the Foundation specify terms of use for grant funds?*
The Foundation will notify investigators of terms of use for grant funds upon invitation to submit a full application.

CONRAD N. HILTON FOUNDATION

30440 Agoura Road
Agoura Hills, CA 91301

818-851-3700

www.hiltonfoundation.org

PRE-PROPOSAL APPLICATION

Please electronically send your proposal, including cover page, NIH biography, scientific narrative, and letter of support from institution to the Foundation’s MS program (MS_Program@hiltonfoundation.org) Please title your submission as: Investigator Name.Institution Name.ProjectName.Date. If you have questions or require assistance, contact Elizabeth Cheung at Elizabeth@hiltonfoundation.org.

Proposal Title:

Proposal description (1-2 sentences):

	Enter response in each cell below.
Applicant Legal Name	
Also Known As	
Tax ID Number (EIN)	
Complete Address	
Main Phone	
Main Fax	
Website	
Name – Organization Contact	
Title	
Email	
Name – Principal Investigator	
Title	
Direct Phone	
Direct Fax	

Email	
Authorized Signer	Enter Yes or No:
Requested amount (USD)	
Term of request (years)	
If multiple years, requested amounts per year	

Signature of Authorized Signer

Date

Print Name

Title