Program Announcement for the Defense Health Agency

Multiple Sclerosis Research Program Investigator-Initiated Research Award

Funding Opportunity Number: HT942526MSRPIIRA

Pre-Application Due: July 30, 2026

Application Due: August 13, 2026

This program announcement must be read in conjunction with the General Application Instructions, version CD26_01.

Content

Before You Begin

- **Active SAM.gov, eBRAP.org and Grants.gov registrations are required for application submission.** User registration for each of these websites can take several weeks or longer. Each applicant must ensure their registrations are active and up to date prior to application preparation.
- **Read this funding opportunity announcement in the order it is written before beginning to prepare application materials.** It is the responsibility of the applicant to determine whether the proposed research meets the intent of this funding opportunity and that all parties meet eligibility requirements.
- **To support application preparation, additional resources are available** including an application process FAQ, a Guide for Intragovernmental & Intramural Applicants and a CDMRP Video Series detailing the application process.

Who to Contact for Support

eBRAP Help Desk

301-682-5507
help@eBRAP.org

Questions regarding funding opportunity submission requirements, as well as technical assistance related to pre-application or intramural application submission.

Grants.gov Support Center

800-518-4726
International: 1-606-545-5035
support@grants.gov

Questions regarding Grants.gov registration and Workspace.

This document uses internal links; you can go back to where you were by pressing the Alt + left arrow keys (Windows) or command + left arrow keys (Macintosh) on your keyboard.

Click ⓘ to be taken to additional guidance and instructions within the General Application Instructions (GAI).

1. Basic Information About the Funding Opportunity

Summary: The fiscal year 2026 (FY26) Multiple Sclerosis Research Program (MSRP) Investigator-Initiated Research Award (IIRA) supports highly rigorous, high-impact research projects that have the potential to make an important contribution to Multiple Sclerosis (MS) research, patient care, and/or quality of life. All applications must address at least one of the FY26 MSRP IIRA focus areas. Research projects may focus on any phase of research, excluding clinical trials. The rationale for a research idea may be derived from laboratory discovery, clinical trial results, population-based studies, a clinician's firsthand knowledge of patients, or anecdotal data. ***Applications must include preliminary and/or published data that are relevant to MS and the proposed research project.***

Distinctive Features: This funding mechanism includes two options: **Established Investigator** or **New Investigator**. The New Investigator option supports applicants early in their faculty appointments.

Funding Details: The Congressionally Directed Medical Research Programs (CDMRP) expects to allot roughly $6.0M to fund approximately six MSRP Investigator-Initiated Research Award applications with total cost caps of $1.0M per award. The maximum period of performance is 3 years. It is anticipated that awards made from this FY26 funding opportunity will be funded with FY26 funds, which will expire for use on September 30, 2032. Awards supported with FY26 funds will be made no later than September 30, 2027.

Submission and Review Dates and Times

- **Pre-Application (Letter of Intent) Submission Deadline:** 5:00 p.m. Eastern Time (ET), July 30, 2026
- **Application Submission Deadline:** 11:59 p.m. ET, August 13, 2026
- **End of Application Verification Period:** 5:00 p.m. ET, August 20, 2026
- **Peer Review:** December 2026
- **Programmatic Review:** February 2027

Announcement Type: Initial

Funding Opportunity Number: HT942526MSRPIIRA

Assistance Listing Number: 12.420

2. Eligibility Information

2.1. Eligible Applicants

2.1.1. Organization

Extramural and intramural U.S. Department of War (DOW) organizations are eligible to apply, ***including foreign and domestic organizations, for-profit and nonprofit organizations, and public or private entities***.

2.1.2. Principal Investigator

Although a Principal Investigator (PI) may be eligible for both the Established Investigator and New Investigator options, only one may be chosen at the time of pre-application submission; the choice is at the PI's discretion.

- **Established Investigator**
  - The PI must be an independent investigator at all career levels.
- **New Investigator**
  - At the application submission deadline, the PI must be an independent investigator within no more than five years from the start of their non-mentored position; and must not have received more than $300,000 in total direct costs for previous or concurrent MS research as a PI of one or more non-mentored, peer-reviewed grant(s) from any agency.

Independent investigators affiliated with an eligible organization are eligible to be named PI on the application, regardless of ethnicity, nationality or citizenship status. **An investigator may be named on only one FY26 Multiple Sclerosis Research Program (MSRP) Investigator-Initiated Research Award (IIRA) application as an Established Investigator or New Investigator.**

2.2. Cost Sharing

Cost sharing is not an eligibility requirement.

2.3. Other

Awards are made to eligible ***organizations***, not to individuals. Refer to the GAI for additional recipient qualification requirements.

3. Program Description

The Defense Health Agency Contracting Activity (DHACA) is soliciting applications to this funding opportunity using delegated authority provided by United States Code, Title 10, Section 4001 (10 USC 4001). The CDMRP is the program office managing this FY26 funding opportunity as part of the MSRP. The CDMRP is located within the Defense Health Agency Research and Development (DHA R&D), which is a part of the Department of Defense, DOD, herein referred to using the secondary title Department of War, DOW. Congress initiated the MSRP in 2009 to provide support for research of high potential impact and exceptional scientific merit. Appropriations for the MSRP from FY09 through FY24 totaled $153.1 million (M). The FY26 appropriation is $15M.

The vision of the MSRP is to prevent, cure, reverse, or slow the progression and lessen the personal and societal impact of multiple sclerosis. The mission is to support pioneering concepts and high-impact research relevant to the prevention, etiology, pathogenesis, assessment, treatment, and ultimate cure of multiple sclerosis for the benefit of Service Members and their Families, Veterans and the American public.

The proposed research must be relevant to active-duty Service Members, Veterans, military beneficiaries and/or the American public.

3.1. Award History

The MSRP IIRA mechanism was first offered in FY15. Since then, 373 IIRA applications were received, and 68 were recommended for funding. The overall funding rate is 18.2%.

3.2. Intent of the Investigator-Initiated Research Award

The MSRP IIRA supports highly rigorous, high-impact research projects that have the potential to make an important contribution to MS research, patient care, and/or quality of life. Research projects may focus on any phase of research, excluding clinical trials. The rationale for a research idea may be derived from laboratory discovery, clinical trial results, population-based studies, a clinician's firsthand knowledge of patients or anecdotal data. ***Applications must include preliminary and/or published data that are relevant to MS and the proposed research project.***

3.2.1. Focus Areas for the IIRA

To meet the intent of the funding opportunity, all applications submitted to the FY26 MSRP IIRA program announcement ***must*** address one or more of the following focus areas:

- **Central Nervous System Repair, Protection and Regenerative Potential in MS**

  Supports innovative mechanistic studies and translational approaches to promote axonal protection, regeneration or remyelination in MS and/or relevant experimental models of demyelination. Examples of acceptable studies include, but are not limited to:

  - Obstacles to repair and approaches to overcome and achieve remyelination. Factors to be considered include extrinsic or intrinsic factors (e.g., mechanical, sex, aging, inhibitory signaling), trophic and inhibitory factors and lifestyle factors.
  - Cell-cell interactions within the central nervous system.
  - Epigenetic regulation of cells within the central nervous system.

- Drugs, biologics, and cell-based therapies that target the central nervous system.
- Identification of factors that promote protection and repair.
- Innate immune-mediated mechanisms within the central nervous system.
- Development of imaging and non-imaging outcome measures of repair.
- Development of new models that reflect disease progression.

Note: Will not support studies solely addressing developmental myelination, dysmyelination, basic mechanisms of demyelination, or peripheral immunomodulatory therapeutic strategies that limit tissue injury secondarily.

- **Correlates of Disease Activity and Progression in MS**

  Supports studies to identify and/or validate correlates of disease activity and progression using ***pre-existing*** specimens and/or data acquired from well-characterized, adequately controlled, and sufficiently powered patient cohorts.

  - Examples of acceptable cohorts for study include controlled clinical trials, observational studies and registries.
  - Analyses may utilize existing clinical data and outcome measures, specimens and/or imaging data.
  - Correlates include clinical outcome measures, patient self-reported measures, and imaging and non-imaging biomarkers.
  - Careful consideration should be given to potential confounders in the study population (e.g., disease-modifying therapies).

  Inclusion of information regarding the quality of the specimens, replication plan, assay validation, or context of use will be given special consideration.

  Note: The study must leverage ***pre-existing*** specimens and/or data that are available at the time of application submission. **The collection of new specimens and/or data is not permitted.**

- **Biology and Measurement of MS Symptoms**

  Supports studies of MS symptoms, which may include pain, fatigue, depression, anxiety, incontinence, impaired mobility, and cognitive, motor, visual or sexual dysfunction, etc. Examples of acceptable studies include, but are not limited to, the following:

  - Mechanisms underlying symptoms of MS.
  - Development of measurements for future interventional studies to alleviate symptoms.
  - Development and/or validation of outcome measures and tools for symptoms including wearables and/or remote data capture.
  - Observational studies on the prevalence or significance of symptoms including the contribution of comorbidities, lifestyle behaviors and high-risk populations. Careful consideration should be given to potential confounders in the study population (e.g., disease-modifying therapies), controls and/or accurate measures of symptoms.

  Note: Will not support studies of disease-modifying therapies that secondarily impact MS symptoms.

- **Mechanisms Contributing to, or Associated With, MS Etiology, Prodrome, Onset and Disease Course**

  Supports studies to identify various factors and their roles in MS etiology, prodrome, onset, activity, disease worsening and progression. Examples of factors include, but are not limited to, the following:

  - Infections (such as Epstein-Barr Virus and SARS-CoV-2) and/or vaccines
  - CNS innate immunity and compliment activation
  - Genetics and/or epigenetics
  - Environment (such as toxins and military exposures)
  - Comorbidities
  - Health behaviors
  - Demographics (including, but not limited to, sex, race, ethnicity, age)

3.2.2. Key Elements for the IIRA

New Investigator Option: The FY26 MSRP IIRA mechanism encourages applications from investigators in the early stages of their MS research career. *The New Investigator option is designed to support the continued development of promising independent investigators that are early in their faculty appointments.* Applications from Established Investigators and New Investigators will be peer- and programmatically reviewed in separate groups. PIs applying under the New Investigator option are encouraged to strengthen their applications through collaboration with investigators experienced in MS research and/or possess other relevant expertise as demonstrated by a record of funding and publications.

For the **"Correlates of Disease Activity and Progression in MS"** focus area, applications ***must*** demonstrate access to the relevant specimens and/or data of the proposed cohort. Refer to Attachment 8: Letter(s) Confirming Access to Specimens and/or Data for more details.

Note for projects involving animal models of MS: Applicants should be prudent in the choice of animal model(s) for their proposed research project. Applicants must justify the relevance of their proposed animal model(s) to the specific aspect of human MS to be studied.

3.2.3. Other Important Considerations for the IIRA

In accordance with the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2026, Section 732, CDMRP does not support the conduct of painful research (U.S. Department of Agriculture pain category D or E) involving domestic cats or dogs, except for studies relating to military or service animals.

Clinical trials are not allowed within this funding opportunity.

All projects should adhere to a core set of standards for rigorous study design and reporting to maximize the reproducibility and translational potential of clinical and preclinical research, such as those described in the STROBE, CONSORT, SPIRIT and ARRIVE 2.0 guidelines.

Applications from investigators within the DOW and applications involving multidisciplinary collaborations among academia, industry, the DOW, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and other federal government agencies are highly encouraged. These relationships can leverage knowledge, infrastructure and access to unique clinical populations that the collaborators bring to the research effort, ultimately advancing research that is of significance to

Service Members, Veterans, their Families and the American Public. If the proposed research relies on access to unique resources or databases, the application must describe the access at the time of submission and include a plan for maintaining access as needed throughout the proposed research.

3.3. Funding Instrument

The funding instrument for awards made under the program announcement will be grants (31 USC 6304).

3.4. Funding Details

Period of Performance: The maximum period of performance is **3** years.

Cost Cap: The application's total costs budgeted for the entire period of performance should not exceed **$1.0M**. If indirect cost rates have been negotiated, indirect costs are to be budgeted in accordance with the organization's negotiated rate. Collaborating organizations should budget associated indirect costs in accordance with each organization's negotiated rate.

All direct and indirect costs of any subaward or contract must be included in the direct costs of the primary award.

The applicant may request the entire maximum funding amount for a project that may have a period of performance less than the maximum **3** years.

The appropriateness of the budget for the proposed research will be assessed during peer review.

Direct Cost Restrictions: For this award mechanism, direct costs:

May be requested for (not all-inclusive):

- Travel in support of multi-institutional collaborations.
- Costs for one investigator to travel to one scientific/technical meeting per year. The intent of travel to scientific/technical meetings should be to present project information or disseminate project results from the MSRP IIRA.

Must not be requested for:

- Costs for travel to scientific/technical meeting(s) beyond the limits stated above.

4. Application Contents and Format

4.1. Application Overview

Application submission is a two-step process requiring both a ***pre-application*** submitted via the Electronic Biomedical Research Application Portal (eBRAP) and a ***full application*** submitted through eBRAP or Grants.gov. Depending on the submission portal, certain aspects of the application will differ.

Intramural DOW organizations submitting a full application should follow instructions for submission through eBRAP.

Extramural organizations submitting a full application must follow instructions for submission through Grants.gov.

4.2. Pre-Application Components

Pre-application submissions must include the following components.

Letter of Intent (LOI) (one-page limit): Provide a brief description of the research to be conducted. Include the FY26 MSRP IIRA Focus Area under which the application will be submitted.

4.3. Full Application Components

Each application submission must include the completed full application package for this program announcement. See Appendix 1 for a checklist of the full application components.

(a) SF424 Research & Related Application for Federal Assistance Form *(Grants.gov submissions only)*:

IMPORTANT: *When completing the SF424 R&R, enter the* ***eBRAP log number*** *assigned during pre-application submission into* ***Block 4a – Federal Identifier****.*

(b) Attachments:

Each attachment of the full application components must be uploaded as an individual file in the format specified and in accordance with the formatting guidelines in the GAI.

- **Attachment 1: Project Narrative (10-page limit): Upload as "ProjectNarrative.pdf".**

  Describe the proposed project in detail using the outline below.

  - **Background:** Describe the problem, question, or knowledge gap related to one or more of the FY26 MSRP IIRA Focus Areas the proposed research will address. ***Clearly describe how the proposed research project directly addresses one or more of the focus areas.*** Present the ideas and scientific rationale behind the proposed research project. Include relevant literature citations and ***preliminary and/or published data relevant to MS and the proposed research project.*** Describe how the previous experience of the PI and research team relates to the proposed research project.
  - **Hypothesis or Objective:** State the hypothesis to be tested or the objective to be reached.

- **Specific Aims:** Concisely explain the proposed research project's specific aims.
- **Research Strategy and Feasibility:**
  - ***For all focus areas, the following criteria apply:***
    - Describe the experimental design, methods, and analyses, including appropriate randomization, blinding, and controls; and how they will achieve reproducible and rigorous results.
    - Describe how data will be collected, handled, and analyzed in a manner that is consistent with the study objectives. Include a complete power analysis to demonstrate that the sample size is appropriate to meet the objectives of the study.
    - Describe the statistical analysis plan appropriate for the proposed research project.
    - If applicable, describe how the analysis will account for potential confounding factors in the study population (e.g., disease-modifying treatments).
    - Address potential problem areas and present alternative methods and approaches.
    - If applicable, submit an Animal Research Plan (Attachment 7) and justify the relevance of the proposed animal model(s) to MS in humans.
    - For applications proposing prospective accrual of human subjects, describe the strategy for the inclusion of women and minorities appropriate to the objectives of the study, including a description of the composition of the proposed study population in terms of sex, racial, and ethnic group, and an accompanying rationale for the selection of subjects.
  - ***In addition, for research addressing the "Correlates of Disease Activity and Progression in MS" focus area:***
    - Describe the proposed pre-existing cohort, including the type of specimens and/or data available.
    - Describe the size of the pre-existing cohort, including the intervention and control groups; and the expected statistical power of the study.
    - Explain how the cohort is appropriate for the study objective.
    - Outline plans and opportunities for eventual validation or independent replication of results in follow-up studies.
- **New Investigator Option:** Collaboration with investigators experienced in MS research and/or possessing other relevant expertise is encouraged. If applicable, describe the specific contributions of the collaborator(s) to the research project. The application should describe how the collaboration(s) will augment the PI's expertise to best address the research question. All New Investigator option applicants must meet specific eligibility criteria as described in Section 2.1.2, Principle Investigator.

Consult appropriate guidelines to ensure relevant aspects of rigorous and reproducible research are adequately planned for and, ultimately, reported.

If the proposed research involves access to military and/or VA patient populations and/or DOW or VA resources or databases, describe the access at the time of submission and include a plan for maintaining access as needed throughout the proposed research. Also

include a plan for obtaining any required data sharing, memorandum of understanding or other agreements required to access and publish data. Refer to the GAI, Appendix 4, for additional considerations.

- **Attachment 2: Supporting Documentation: Combine and upload as a single file named "Support.pdf".**

  There are no page limits for these components unless otherwise noted. Include only components described below; inclusion of items not requested or viewed as an extension of the Project Narrative will result in the removal of those items or may result in administrative withdrawal of the application.

  References Cited: List the references cited in the Project Narrative using a standard reference format (include URLs, if available).

  List of Abbreviations, Acronyms and Symbols: Provide a list of abbreviations, acronyms and symbols.

  Facilities, Existing Equipment and Other Resources: Describe the facilities and equipment available for performance of the proposed project; include any additional facilities or equipment proposed for acquisition at no cost to the award. Indicate whether government-furnished facilities or equipment are proposed for use. If so, reference the original or present government award under which the facilities or equipment items are now accountable. There is not a standardized form for this information.

  Publications and/or Patents: Include a list of relevant publication URLs and/or patent abstracts. If articles are not publicly available, then copies of up to five published manuscripts may be included in Attachment 2. Extra items will not be reviewed.

  Letters of Support (five-page limit per letter is recommended): Provide individual letters signed by collaborating individuals and/or organizational officials demonstrating that the PI has the support and resources necessary for the proposed work. Letters from the PI's Department Chair, or appropriate organization official, should also confirm that the PI(s) meet eligibility criteria. If applicable, provide a letter of support, signed by the lowest-ranking person with approval authority, confirming participation of intramural DOW collaborator(s) and/or access to military populations, databases or DOW resources. If applicable, provide a letter of support signed by the VA Facility Director(s), or an individual designated by the VA Facility Director(s), confirming access to VA patients, resources and/or VA research space.

  Sex as a Biological Variable Strategy (two-page limit is recommended): Describe the strategy for how sex will be considered as a biological variable. This strategy should include a brief discussion of what is currently known regarding sex differences in the applicable research area. Clearly articulate how sex as a biological variable will be factored into the data analysis plan and how data will be collected and disaggregated by sex. If needed, provide a strong rationale for proposing a single-sex study, based on justification from scientific literature, preliminary data or other relevant considerations. Refer to the CDMRP Directive on Sex as a Biological Variable in Research for additional information.

  Research Sharing Plan: Describe the type of data or research resources (e.g., bio-specimen, analysis tool/software, training material) to be made publicly available as a result of the proposed work. Describe the mechanism (e.g., direct sharing,

repository, mixed mode) by which data and resources generated during the period of performance will be shared with the research community and other affected communities, including clinical research participants. Include the name of the repository(ies) where scientific data and resources arising from the proposed study will be archived, if applicable. Identify and provide the rationale for any data or resources that will not be shared (e.g. for intellectual property, feasibility, cost, or other considerations). The plan should also protect participant privacy, confidential and proprietary data, and performer/third-party intellectual property. Provide a milestone plan for disseminating data/results including when data and resources will be made available to other users. In cases where the study participant could potentially derive medical or other benefit from the information, explain whether the results of screening and/or study participation will be shared with the participant or their primary care provider, including results from any screening or diagnostic tests performed as part of the study.

Do not submit a copy of the National Institutes of Health Data Management and Sharing Plan or duplicate the Data Management Plan which will be requested only after a recommendation for funding is made.

Refer to the CDMRP Directive on Sharing Data and Research Resources for more information about the CDMRP's expectations for making data and research resources publicly available.

- **Attachment 3: Technical Abstract (one-page limit): Upload as "TechAbs.pdf".**

Write the technical abstract using the outline below. Clarity and completeness within the space limits are highly important.

Background: State the FY26 MSRP IIRA Focus Area(s) to be addressed. ***Describe how the proposed research project directly addresses one or more of the FY26 IIRA focus areas.*** Present the ideas and reasoning behind the proposed research project.

Hypothesis/Objective(s): State the hypothesis to be tested and/or objective(s) to be reached.

Specific Aims: State the specific aims of the study.

Study Design: Describe the study design, including appropriate controls.

Impact: Explain how the proposed research project will produce results that are likely to translate, whether in the short term or long term, into advancing MS research, patient care, and/or quality of life.

Military Relevance: Describe how the study is relevant to military health.

- **Attachment 4: Lay Abstract (one-page limit): Upload as "LayAbs.pdf".**

The lay abstract should address the points outlined below ***in a manner that is readily understood by readers without a background in science or medicine.*** Avoid overuse of scientific jargon, acronyms and abbreviations. ***Do not duplicate the technical abstract.***

- Summarize the objectives and rationale for the proposed research.
- What population will the research help, and how will it help them?
- What are the potential applications, benefits, and risks of the anticipated outcomes?

- What are the likely contributions of the proposed research project to advancing research, patient care and/or quality of life?
- What is the potential benefit of the proposed study and the anticipated outcomes to Service Members, Veterans and/or their Families.

- **Attachment 5: Statement of Work (three-page limit): Upload as "SOW.pdf".** Refer to eBRAP for the Suggested SOW Format.

  For guidance on preparing the SOW, refer to the Example: Assembling a Generic Statement of Work, Include milestones for data or research resource(s) sharing.

- **Attachment 6: Impact Statement (one-page limit): Upload as "Impact.pdf".**

  Explain why the proposed research project is important and the impact it will have on one or more of the FY26 MSRP IIRA Focus Areas. Describe the potential impact(s) under two separate headings:

  - ***Short-term impact:*** Detail the anticipated outcome(s) that will be directly attributed to the results of the proposed research project related to one or more of the FY26 MSRP IIRA focus areas.
  - ***Long-term impact:*** Explain the anticipated long-term gains from the proposed research project, including how the new understanding will ultimately contribute toward the goal of advancing MS research, patient care, and/or quality of life related to one or more of the FY26 MSRP IIRA focus areas.
  - If applicable, describe how the anticipated outcomes of the proposed study will make an impact in understanding health differences between sexes.

- **Attachment 7: Animal Research Plan (three-page limit): Upload as "AnimalResPlan.pdf".** ***(Attachment 7 is only applicable and required for applications proposing animal studies.)***

  If the proposed study involves animals, a summary describing the animal research that will be conducted must be included in the application. Consult the ARRIVE guidelines 2.0 to ensure relevant aspects of rigorous animal research are adequately planned for and, ultimately, reported. The Animal Research Plan may not be an exact replica of the protocol(s) submitted to the Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC). The Animal Research Plan should address the following points to achieve reproducible and rigorous results for each proposed animal study:

  - Briefly describe the research objective(s) of the animal study. Explain how and why the animal species, strain, and model(s) being used can address the scientific objectives and, where appropriate, the study's relevance to human biology.
  - Summarize the procedures to be conducted. Describe how the study will be controlled.
  - Describe the randomization and blinding procedures for the study, and any other measures to be taken to minimize the effects of subjective bias during animal treatment and assessment of results. If randomization and/or blinding will not be utilized, provide justification.
  - Provide a sample size estimate for each study arm and the method by which it was derived, including power analysis calculations.

- Describe how data will be handled, including rules for stopping data collection, criteria for inclusion and exclusion of data, how outliers will be defined and handled, statistical methods for data analysis, and identification of the primary endpoint(s).

- **Attachment 8: Letter(s) Confirming Access to Specimens and/or Data: Upload as "Access.pdf".** ***(Attachment 8 is only applicable and required for applications addressing the "Correlates of Disease Activity and Progression in MS" focus area.)***

  If the application addresses the Focus Area of "Correlates of Disease Activity and Progression in MS," or if the application addresses more than one Focus Areas and one of them is "Correlates of Disease Activity and Progression in MS," provide a confirmation letter signed by the appropriate Institution Official who has the authority to confirm access to the proposed cohort specimens and/or data necessary to carry out the study.

  The study must leverage ***pre-existing*** specimens and/or data that are available at the time of application submission. ***The collection of new sets of specimens and/or data is not permitted.***

- **Attachment 9: Eligibility Statement (one-page limit): Upload as "Eligibility.pdf".** ***(Attachment 9 is only applicable and required for applications to the New Investigator Option.)***

  Provide a letter signed by the Department Chair, Division Chief, or equivalent official, verifying that the eligibility requirements will be met on the application submission deadline. The letter should verify that the PI is an independent investigator at the level of Assistant Professor (or equivalent), with no more than five years from the start of their independent faculty position (excluding time spent in residency, fellowship, or on family medical leave), and has not received more than $300,000 in total direct costs for previous or concurrent MS research as a PI of one or more non-mentored, peer-reviewed grant(s) from any agency. (Refer to Section 2.1, Eligible Applicants.)

- **Attachment 10: Representations** ***(Grants.gov submissions only)*****: Upload as "RequiredReps.pdf".** All extramural applicants must complete and submit the Required Representations document available on eBRAP.

- **Attachment 11: Suggested Intragovernmental/Intramural Budget Form** ***(if applicable)*****: Upload as "IGBudget.pdf".** If an intramural DOW organization will be a collaborator in the performance of the project, complete a separate budget for that organization using the Suggested Intragovernmental/Intramural Budget form available on eBRAP.

(c) Additional Application Materials:

The following are additional forms for application submission. Follow the instructions specific to the submission portal, as found within the GAI.

Grants.gov	eBRAP.org

i. Research & Related Senior/Key Person Profile (Expanded)

- **Biographical Sketch**
- **Current/Pending Support**

  Intragovernmental applicants must include their internally supported research and development programs.

ii. Research & Related Budget

iii. Project/Performance Site Location(s)

iv. Research & Related Subaward Budget Attachment(s) *(if applicable, Grants.gov submissions only)*

4.4. Other Application Elements

If recommended for funding, a data management plan compliant with Section 3.c, Enclosure 3, DoD Instructions 3200.12 will be requested.

The government reserves the right to request a revised budget, budget justification and/or additional information for applications recommended for funding.

5. Submission Requirements

5.1. Location of Application Package

Download the application package components for HT942526MSRPIIRA from Grants.gov or eBRAP, depending on which submission portal will be used.

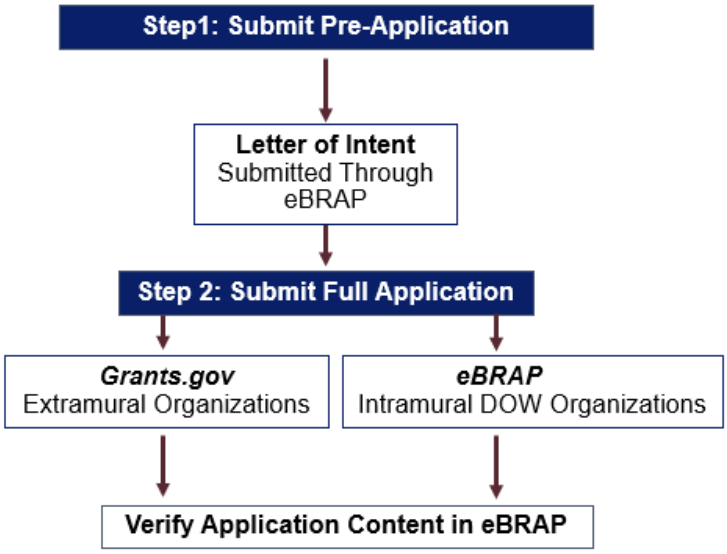
5.2. Unique Entity Identifier and System for Award Management

The applicant organization must be registered as an entity in the System for Award Management (SAM), SAM.gov, and receive confirmation of an "Active" status before submitting an application through Grants.gov. Organizations must include the unique entity identifier (UEI) generated by the SAM in applications to this funding opportunity and maintain an active registration in the SAM at all times during which it has an active Federal award or an application under consideration.

5.3. Submission Instructions

The CDMRP uses two portal systems to accept pre- and full application submissions. The workflow below shows which portal system to use for pre- and full application submissions, respectively.

Application Submission Workflow



5.3.1. Pre-Application Submission

All pre-application components must be submitted by the PI through eBRAP.

During the pre-application process, eBRAP assigns each submission a unique log number. This unique log number is required during the full application submission process. The eBRAP log number, application title and all information for the PI, Business Official(s), performing organization, and contracting organization must be consistent throughout the entire

pre-application and full application submission process. Inconsistencies may delay application processing and limit or negate the ability to view, modify and verify the application in eBRAP. Contact the eBRAP Help Desk if any changes need to be made.

When starting the pre-application, PIs should select a Mechanism Option appropriate to their pre-application:

Application Includes:	Select Mechanism Option:
Established Investigator	Investigator-Initiated Research Award – Established Investigator (IIRA-EI)
New Investigator	Investigator-Initiated Research Award – New Investigator (IIRA-NI)

5.3.2. Full Application Submission

Grants.gov Submissions: Full applications from extramural organizations *must* be submitted through the Grants.gov Workspace.

eBRAP Submissions: Only intramural DOW organizations may submit full applications through eBRAP.

5.3.3. Applicant Verification of Full Application Submission in eBRAP

Independent of the submission portal, once the full application is submitted, it is transmitted to and processed in eBRAP; the transmission to eBRAP may take up to 48 hours. At this stage, the PI and organizational representatives will receive an email from eBRAP instructing them to log in to eBRAP to review, modify and verify the full application submission. ***The Project Narrative and Research & Related Budget Form cannot be changed after the application submission deadline.*** Other application components, including subaward budget(s) and subaward budget justification(s), may be changed until the application verification period ends. The full application cannot be modified once the application verification period ends.

5.4. Submission Dates and Times

The pre-application and full application submission process should be started early to avoid missing deadlines. Regardless of submission portal used, all pre- and full application components must be submitted by the deadlines stipulated in this program announcement. There are no grace periods for deadlines; failure to meet submission deadlines will result in application rejection. ***The DHACA cannot make allowances/exceptions for submission problems encountered by the applicant.***

Submission dates and times are specified in Section 1, Basic Information.

5.5. Intergovernmental Review

Not applicable for this funding opportunity.

6. Application Review Information

6.1. Application Compliance Review

Submitting applications that propose essentially the same research project to different funding opportunities within the same program and fiscal year is prohibited and will result in administrative withdrawal of the duplicative application(s).

While it is allowable to propose similar research projects to different programs within the CDMRP or to other organizations, duplication of funding or accepting funding from more than one source for the same research is prohibited. See the CDMRP's Directive on Research Duplication.

Including classified research data within the application and/or proposing research that may produce classified outcomes or outcomes deemed sensitive to national security concerns, may result in application withdrawal.

Members of the FY26 MSRP Programmatic Panel must not be involved in any pre-application or full application including, but not limited to, concept design, application development, budget preparation and the development of any supporting documentation, including personal letters of support/recommendation for the research and/or PI. Programmatic panel members ***may*** provide letters to confirm PI eligibility and access to laboratory space, equipment and other resources necessary for the project if that is part of their regular roles and responsibilities (e.g., as Department Chair). ***A list of the FY26 MSRP Programmatic Panel members can be found on the CDMRP website.***

Additional restrictions and associated administrative responses are outlined in Section 9.2, Administrative Actions.

6.2. Review Criteria

6.2.1. Pre-Application Screening Criteria

Pre-applications submitted to this funding opportunity are used for program planning purposes only (e.g., reviewer recruitment) and will not be screened.

6.2.2. Peer Review Criteria

To determine technical merit, all applications will be evaluated individually according to the following **scored criteria**, which are listed in decreasing order of importance:

- **Research Strategy and Feasibility**
  - **For all focus areas**
    - ***To what extent the proposed research directly addresses one or more of the FY26 MSRP IIRA Focus Areas.***
    - How well the preliminary data and scientific rationale support the proposed research project.
    - To what extent the proposed research project is feasible as described.
    - To what extent the statistical analysis plan is appropriate for the proposed research project.

  - How well the study is designed to achieve reproducible and rigorous results, including controls, sample size estimation, power analysis, blinding, randomization and data handling.
  - If applicable, how well the analysis accounts for potential confounding factors in the study population (e.g., disease-modifying treatments).
  - How well the application identifies potential problems and describes alternative approaches.
  - If applicable, how well the proposed animal studies are designed to achieve the objectives, including the choice of model, the model's relevance to MS in humans, and endpoints/outcome measures to be used.
  - For applications proposing prospective accrual of human subjects, the extent to which the strategy for the inclusion of women and minorities and the distribution of proposed enrollment are appropriate for the proposed research.
  - ***In addition, for applications addressing the "Correlates of Disease Activity and Progression in MS" focus area, the following criteria also apply:***
    - How well the application demonstrates access to the proposed pre-existing cohort specimens and/or data.
    - To what extent the proposed pre-existing cohort is appropriate for the objective of the study.
    - To what extent the proposed pre-existing cohort is well-characterized and adequately controlled.
    - To what extent the statistical power of the study is appropriate, given the size of the cohort.
    - How well the application describes future plans and opportunities for validation or replication of results.

- **Impact**
  - To what extent the anticipated short-term outcomes will be directly attributed to the results of the proposed research project related to one or more of the FY26 MSRP IIRA Focus Areas.
  - To what extent the anticipated long-term gains from the proposed research project, including how the new understanding will ultimately contribute to the goal of advancing MS research, patient care, and/or quality of life, relate to one or more of the FY26 MSRP IIRA Focus Areas.
  - If applicable, to what extent the anticipated outcomes of the proposed study will make an impact in understanding health differences between sexes.
- **Personnel**
  - To what extent the experience, expertise, and record of accomplishments of the PI and key personnel demonstrate their ability to successfully complete the proposed research project.
  - To what extent the levels of effort by the PI and other key personnel are appropriate to ensure the success of the proposed research project.
  - How the research team's background and expertise are appropriate to accomplish the proposed work.

- ***In addition, for the New Investigator option:***
  - If applicable, to what extent the specific contributions of the collaborator(s) will augment the PI's expertise to best address the research question.

In addition, the following criteria will also contribute to the overall evaluation of the application, but will not be individually scored and are therefore termed **unscored criteria**:

- **Research Sharing Plan**
  - To what extent the plan for sharing of project data and research resources is appropriate and reasonable, and includes dissemination to affected communities, study participants and/or the scientific community. If applicable, whether specific repository(ies) are named where data and research resources arising from the project will be stored.
- **Budget**
  - Whether the budget is appropriate for the proposed research.
- **Environment**
  - To what extent the scientific environment and level of institutional support is appropriate for the proposed research project.
  - How well the research requirements are supported by the availability of and accessibility to facilities and resources.
  - To what extent the quality and level of institutional support are appropriate for the proposed research project.
  - If applicable, to what degree the intellectual and material property plan is appropriate.
- **Application Presentation**
  - To what extent the writing, clarity and presentation of the application components influence the review.

6.2.3. Programmatic Review

To make funding recommendations and select the application(s) that, individually or collectively, will best achieve the program objectives, the following criteria are used by programmatic reviewers:

- Ratings and evaluations of peer reviewers
- Relevance to the priorities of the FY26 MSRP, as evidenced by the following:
  - Adherence to the intent of the funding opportunity
  - Program portfolio composition
  - Relative impact
  - Programmatic relevance to one or more of the FY26 MSRP IIRA Focus Areas

6.3. Application Review and Selection Process

6.3.1. Pre-Application

There is no review and selection process for pre-applications submitted to this funding opportunity. ***CDMRP will NOT provide an invitation to submit a full application after pre-***

application submission. Applicants are encouraged to develop pre-application and full application components concurrently and submit a full application AFTER successful submission of the pre-application.

6.3.2. Full Application

All applications are evaluated by scientists, clinicians and consumers in a two-tier review process. The first tier is **peer review**, the evaluation of applications against established criteria to determine technical merit, where each application is assessed for its own merit, independent of other applications. The second tier is **programmatic review**, a comparison-based process in which applications with high scientific and technical merit are further evaluated for programmatic relevance. Final recommendations for funding are subject to review and approval by a designated official. ***The highest-scoring applications from the first tier of review are not automatically recommended for funding. Funding recommendations depend on various factors as described in Section 6.2.3, Programmatic Review.*** Additional information about the two-tier process used by the CDMRP can be found on the CDMRP website.

Funding of applications received is contingent upon the availability of federal funds for this program, the number of applications received, the quality and merit of the applications as evaluated by peer and programmatic review, and the requirements of the government. Funds to be obligated on any award resulting from this funding opportunity will be available for use for a limited time period based on the fiscal year of the funds.

6.4. Risk, Integrity and Performance Information

Prior to making an assistance agreement award where the federal share is expected to exceed the simplified acquisition threshold, as defined in the Code of Federal Regulations, Title 2, Part 200.1 (2 CFR 200.1), over the period of performance, the federal awarding agency is required to review and consider any information about the applicant that is available in the SAM.

An applicant organization may review the SAM and submit comments on any information currently available about the organization that a federal awarding agency previously entered. The federal awarding agency will consider any comments by the applicant, in addition to other information in the designated integrity and performance system, in making a judgment about the applicant's integrity, business ethics and record of performance under federal awards when determining a recipient's qualification prior to award, according to the qualification standards of the Department of Defense Grant and Agreement Regulations (DoDGARs), Section 22.415.

In accordance with National Security Presidential Memorandum-33 and all associated laws, all fundamental research funded by the DOW must be evaluated for affiliations with foreign entities. All applicant organizations must disclose foreign affiliations of all key personnel named on applications. Failure to disclose foreign affiliations of key personnel shall lead to withdrawal of recommendations to fund applications. Applicant organizations may be presented with an opportunity to mitigate identified risks, particularly those pertaining to influence from foreign entities specified in law. Implementation of mitigation discussions and utilization of the DOD Component Decision Matrix must decrease risk of foreign influence in accordance with the above-mentioned laws and guidance prior to award.

7. Federal Award Notices

For each compliant full application received, the organizational representative(s) and PI will receive email notification when the funding recommendations are posted to eBRAP, typically within 6 weeks after programmatic review. At this time, each PI will receive a peer review summary statement on the strengths and weaknesses of the application and an information paper describing the application receipt and review process for the MSRP award mechanisms. The information papers and a list of organizations and PIs recommended for funding are also posted on the program's page within the CDMRP website. After all awards are made, the CDMRP includes individual award information in a searchable database.

If an application is recommended for funding, after the email notification is posted to eBRAP, a government representative will contact the person authorized to negotiate on behalf of the recipient organization.

Only an appointed DHACA Grants Officer may obligate the government to the expenditure of funds to an extramural organization. No commitment on the part of the government should be inferred from discussions with any other individual. ***The award document signed by the Grants Officer is the official authorizing document (i.e., assistance agreement).***

Intragovernmental obligations of funding will be made according to the terms of a negotiated Inter-Agency Agreement and managed by a CDMRP Science Officer.

Funding obligated to ***intragovernmental and intramural DOW organizations*** will be sent through the Military Interdepartmental Purchase Request (MIPR), Funding Authorization Document (FAD) or Direct Charge Work Breakdown Structure processes. Transfer of funds is contingent upon appropriate safety and administrative approvals. Intragovernmental and intramural DOW investigators and collaborators must coordinate receipt and commitment of funds through their respective Resource Manager/Task Area Manager/Comptroller or equivalent Business Official.

An organization may, at its own risk and without the government's prior approval, incur obligations and expenditures to cover costs up to 90 days before the beginning date of the initial budget period of a new award.

8. Post-Award Requirements

8.1. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

Applicable requirements in the DoDGARs found in 32 CFR, Chapter I, Subchapter C, and 2 CFR, Chapter XI, apply to grants and cooperative agreements resulting from this program announcement.

The GAI contain information regarding administrative requirements and national policy requirements.

Refer to full text of the latest DoD R&D Terms and Conditions and the DHACA Terms and Conditions for further information.

If there are delinquencies in technical reporting requirements for any existing DHA or U.S. Army Medical Research and Development Command awards at the applicant organization, DHACA will not issue any new awards to the applicant organization until all delinquent reports have been submitted.

Applications recommended for funding that involve animals, human data, human specimens, human subjects or human cadavers must be reviewed for compliance with federal animal and/or human subjects protection requirements and must be approved by the DHA R&D Office of Research and Regulatory Compliance (ORRC), prior to implementation. This administrative review requirement is in addition to the local IACUC, Institutional Review Board (IRB) or Ethics Committee (EC) review.

8.2. Reporting

Annual technical progress reports as well as a final technical progress report will be required. Annual and final technical progress reports must be prepared in accordance with the Research Performance Progress Report (RPPR).

The Award Terms and Conditions will specify whether additional and/or more frequent reporting is required.

Award Expiration Transition Plan: An Award Expiration Transition Plan, using the template available on eBRAP, must be submitted with the final progress report.

The Award Expiration Transition Plan must outline whether and how the research supported by this award will progress and must include source(s) of funding, either known or pending.

Public Health Service (PHS) Inclusion Enrollment Reporting ***(required for research proposing clinical research)***: Enrollment reporting on the basis of sex, race, and/or ethnicity will be required with each annual and final progress report. The PHS Inclusion Enrollment Report is available on eBRAP.

Awards resulting from this program announcement may entail additional reporting requirements related to recipient integrity and performance matters. Recipient organizations that have federal contract, grant and cooperative agreement awards with a cumulative total value greater than $10M are required to provide information to the SAM about certain civil, criminal and administrative proceedings that reached final disposition within the most recent 5-year period and that were connected with their performance of a federal award. These recipients are required to disclose, semiannually, information about criminal, civil and administrative proceedings as specified in the applicable Representations.

8.3. Additional Requirements

Unless otherwise restricted, changes in the PI or organization will be allowed on a case-by-case basis, provided the intent of the award mechanism is met.

An organizational transfer of an award will not be allowed in the last year of the original period of performance or any extension thereof.

9. Other Information

9.1. Program Announcement Version

Questions related to this program announcement should refer to the program name, the program announcement name and the program announcement version code CD26_01d.

9.2. Administrative Actions

After receipt of full applications, the following administrative actions may occur.

9.2.1. Rejection

The following will result in administrative rejection of the full application:

- The Project Narrative is missing.
- The Budget is missing.
- The pre-application was not submitted.
- The Project Narrative exceeds page limit.
- For studies utilizing animal models, Attachment 7: Animal Research Plan is missing.
- For studies addressing the "Correlates of Disease Activity and Progression in MS" focus area, Attachment 8: Letter(s) Confirming Access to Specimens and/or Data is missing.

9.2.2. Modification

- Pages exceeding the specified limits will be removed prior to reviewing all documents.
- Documents not requested will be removed.

9.2.3. Withdrawal

The following may result in administrative withdrawal of the full application:

- A member of the FY26 MSRP Programmatic Panel is named as being involved in the development or execution of the research proposed or is found to have assisted in the pre-application or application processes.
- The application includes the name(s) of personnel from either of the CDMRP peer or programmatic review companies for which conflicts cannot be adequately mitigated. For FY26, the identities of the peer review contractor and the programmatic review contractor may be found on the CDMRP website.
- Personnel from applicant or collaborating organizations are found to have contacted persons involved in the review or approval process to gain protected evaluation information or to influence the evaluation process.
- The application from an extramural organization, including non-DOW federal agencies, is received through eBRAP.

- The federal government recipient organization (including an intramural DOW organization): (a) cannot accept and execute the entirety of the requested budget in FY26 funds; and/or (b) cannot coordinate the use of contractual, assistance or other appropriate agreements to provide funds to collaborators.
- The application fails to conform to this program announcement description.
- The application includes URLs, with the exception of links in the References Cited and Publication and/or Patent sections.
- The application includes research data that are classified and/or proposes research that may produce classified outcomes, or outcomes deemed sensitive to national security concerns.
- For the “Central Nervous System Repair, Protection, and Regenerative Potential in MS” focus area, the application is for a study addressing developmental myelination, dysmyelination, basic mechanisms of demyelination or peripheral immunomodulatory therapeutic strategies that limit tissue injury secondarily.
- For the “Biology and Measurement of MS Symptoms” focus area, the application is for a study of disease-modifying therapies that secondarily impact MS symptoms.
- For the “Correlates of Disease Activity and Progression in MS” focus area, the application does not demonstrate access to the relevant specimens and/or data of the proposed cohort.
- The application does not include preliminary and/or published data that are relevant to MS and the proposed research project.
- The application does not address one or more of the FY26 MSRP IIRA Focus Areas.
- The same research project is submitted to different funding opportunities within the same program and fiscal year.
- The PI does not meet the eligibility criteria.
- A clinical trial is proposed.
- If an investigator is named in multiple FY26 MSRP IIRA applications as an Established Investigator or New Investigator, only the first application(s) received will be accepted; additional applications will be administratively withdrawn.

9.2.4. Withhold

Applications that appear to involve research misconduct will be administratively withheld from further consideration pending organizational investigation. The organization will be required to provide the findings of the investigation to the DHACA Grants Officer for a determination of the final disposition of the application.

Appendix 1. Full Application Submission Checklist

Full Application Components	Uploaded
SF424 Research & Related Application for Federal Assistance ***(Grants.gov submissions only)***	☐
Summary (Tab 1) and Application Contacts (Tab 2) ***(eBRAP submissions only)***	☐
Attachments	
Project Narrative – Attachment 1, upload as "ProjectNarrative.pdf"	☐
Supporting Documentation – Attachment 2, upload as "Support.pdf"	☐
Technical Abstract – Attachment 3, upload as "TechAbs.pdf"	☐
Lay Abstract – Attachment 4, upload as "LayAbs.pdf"	☐
Statement of Work – Attachment 5, upload as "SOW.pdf"	☐
Impact Statement – Attachment 6, upload as "Impact.pdf"	☐
Animal Research Plan *(if applicable)* – Attachment 7, upload as "AnimalResPlan.pdf"	☐
Letter(s) Confirming Access to Specimens and/or Data *(if applicable)* – Attachment 8, upload as "Access.pdf"	☐
Eligibility Statement *(if applicable)* – Attachment 9, upload as "Eligibility.pdf"	☐
Representations *(Grants.gov submissions only)* – Attachment 10, upload as "RequiredReps.pdf"	☐
Suggested Intragovernmental/Intramural Budget Form *(if applicable)* – Attachment 11, upload as "IGBudget.pdf"	☐
Additional Application Materials	
Research & Related Senior/Key Person Profile (Expanded)	☐
Attach Biographical Sketch for Senior/Key Persons (Biosketch_LastName.pdf)	☐
Attach Current/Pending Support for Senior/Key Persons (Support_LastName.pdf)	☐
Research & Related Budget	☐
Project/Performance Site Location(s)	☐
Research & Related Subaward Budget Attachment(s) *(if applicable)*	☐

Appendix 2. Acronym List

ARRIVE	Animal Research: Reporting of In Vivo Experiments
CDMRP	Congressionally Directed Medical Research Programs
CFR	Code of Federal Regulations
CONSORT	Consolidated Standards of Reporting Trials
DHA	Defense Health Agency
DHA R&D	Defense Health Agency Research and Development
DHACA	Defense Health Agency Contracting Activity
DOD	U.S. Department of Defense
DoDGARs	Department of Defense Grant and Agreement Regulations
DOW	U.S. Department of War
eBRAP	Electronic Biomedical Research Application Portal
EC	Ethics Committee
ET	Eastern Time
FAD	Funding Authorization Document
FY	Fiscal Year
GAI	General Application Instructions
IACUC	Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee
IIRA	Investigator-Initiated Research Award
IRB	Institutional Review Board
LOI	Letter of Intent
M	Million
MSRP	Multiple Sclerosis Research Program
MIPR	Military Interdepartmental Purchase Request
ORRC	Office of Research and Regulatory Compliance
PDF	Portable Document Format
PHS	Public Health Service
PI	Principal Investigator
R&D	Research and Development
RPPR	Research Performance Progress Report
SAM	System for Award Management
SF424 R&R	Standard Form 424 (Application for Federal Assistance, Research & Related)
SPIRIT	Standard Protocol Items: Recommendations for Interventional Trials
STROBE	STrengthening the Reporting of OBservational studies in Epidemiology

SOW	Statement of Work
UEI	Unique Entity Identifier
URL	Uniform Resource Locator
USC	United States Code
VA	U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs