



## **TMS Annual Conference Travel Grants Assessment Process**

From 2024, we are trialling an alternative process for the awarding of TMS AGM travel grants. This is a popular scheme and we receive more applications than we can fund each year. To ensure the fairness with which fundable applications are considered and to reduce the administrative burden we are implementing a new lottery scheme for funding.

Applications will initially be assessed using existing criteria to ensure that they meet a high threshold for: fit to scheme, benefit of the funding to the individuals research and career trajectory, need and financial planning. Funding will be allocated to projects that meet all these high thresholds via a lottery system. This approach is in line with other funding and/or charitable bodies such as the Palaeontological Association, UK's National Environment Research Council, Swiss National Funding Council, Health Research Council of New Zealand.

TMS Annual Conference Travel Grants will be assessed as to whether they meet expected standards for the following criteria:

1. Completeness of the application and adherence to the terms and conditions.
2. Description of benefit to applicants' scientific career/research project development
3. Explanation of why the funding is required for financial support of the activity
4. Provision of a realistic budget

Projects that do not meet the expected standards for each of these criteria will not be considered further. Bursaries that meet the minimum standards for consideration will be awarded using an anonymised lottery system that selects from all applications.

### **Scoring criteria**

1. **Completeness of the application and adherence to the terms and conditions:** This will be assessed on a pass or fail basis. Applications that are deemed to fail any of the stated terms and conditions, e.g., membership status or that are incomplete, e.g., do not include an answer to one or more of the scoring criteria, or that are not registered for a talk or poster at the conference.
2. **Description of benefit to applicants' research and scientific career:** This section should detail how the proposed funds and attendance at the conference will benefit the applicants research, career development and longer-term career trajectory, as appropriate. This category will be scored out of 4 using the following indicative criteria: 4= Answer provides strong evidence of relevant activity that directly benefits applicants' research, career development and trajectory. 2= Answer provides some evidence of how the activity will directly benefit the applicants' research, career development and trajectory. 0= Provides little or no detail of how the activity proposed will benefit the applicants' research, personal development, and career plans. A minimum score of 2 is required for this application to be considered for funding.
3. **Explanation of why TMS funding is required for financial support of the activity:** A clear outline of current research funding situation (e.g., position, funding source) and why additional funding is being sought, e.g., why your current funding cannot support this

visit. This category will be scored out of 4 using the following indicative criteria: 4=Clear outline of current funding situation and strong justification for why activity not already costed/can't be covered from elsewhere. 2= Outline of current funding situation provided with standard justification for why activity not already costed/can't be covered from elsewhere. 0= Incomplete or no outline of current funding situation and why activity not already costed/can't be covered from elsewhere. A minimum score of 2 is required for this application to be considered for funding.

4. **Provision of a realistic budget:** A detailed breakdown of the total costs to be incurred to enable the activity to proceed AND the specific costs requested are required. For example, you might require £750 to attend the conference to pay for registration, travel and accommodation but the award will only fund up to £250. You should detail both elements. You must detail both sets of costs so that the feasibility of the request can be assessed. This category will be scored out of 4 using the following indicative criteria: 4 = A fully costed and realistic budget with high potential that applicant can undertake activities on receipt of the grant. 2= A budget is provided but lacks some detail but likelihood that applicant can undertake activity is clear. 0= A poorly conceived budget that lacks detail and/or unlikely that award of grant will enable activity to proceed. A minimum score of 2 is required for this application to be considered for funding.

### **Details of the lottery scheme**

1. All projects will be entered into a spreadsheet and given a number by the Events Secretary or Delegated Lead.
2. All projects will be assessed individually and scored by members of the panel to ensure their fit to criteria 1-4.
3. These scores will be discussed in a washup meeting between the panel members. Applications that do not pass criterion 1, as well as those that do not meet the minimum score for criteria 2–4 will be removed from the spreadsheet and not be considered further. All remaining applications are considered equally fundable, and funding will be allocated using a lottery system.
5. The spreadsheet number of each project will be entered into a random number selector, with numbers being chosen at random until all funding is allocated.
6. All applicants will be informed of the outcome of their application. Applicants can be told whether their proposal was scored highly enough to be considered for funding but not selected in the lottery.