

DISTINGUISHED INVESTIGATOR 2024

BIOSCIENCE AND BASIC BIOMEDICINE

Information and guidelines for applicants

Science
Investigator
2024
Bioscience and Basic Biomedicine
Information and guidelines for applicants

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Information about the call

Grant capital:
DKK 20 million

Award amount
Up to DKK 10 million per grant

Application form opens:
30 October 2023

Application deadline:
11 January 2024

Applicant notification:
April 2024

Earliest start date:
1 June 2024

Latest start date:
1 April 2025

Review committee:
Committee on Bioscience and Basic Biomedicine

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1 DISTINGUISHED INVESTIGATOR

Bioscience and Basic Biomedicine

These guidelines are intended to assist you in the application process when applying for a grant from the Novo Nordisk Foundation (NNF). It is important that you carefully read these guidelines before initiating the application process, as the guidelines contain the complete call text as well as instructions regarding the completion of the application.

- **Section 1** describes the overall frame and conditions of the call and the evaluation and specifies the criteria for applicants and projects.
- **Section 2** provides the technical guidance for how to access and navigate in the application and grant management system NORMA.
- **Section 3** aids with essential information to include, and best practice of how to apply for this specific call.

NNF will treat all applicant and application information confidentially. Read more about how NNF processes personal data under 'privacy & security' in the online application system, NORMA. See how to access NORMA in section 2 of these guidelines.

1.1 PURPOSE

With the overall aim of catalysing Danish fundamental research impacting better health through knowledge, the purpose of the 'Distinguished Investigator – Bioscience and Basic Biomedicine' grant is to support leading professors who propose to undertake novel and ambitious projects that will bring new and important insight into life and health.

1.2 AREAS OF SUPPORT

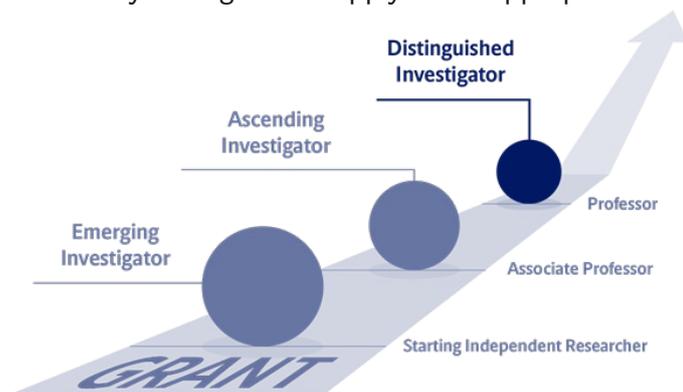
The fundamental research should be within bioscience and/or basic biomedicine and the project relevant for understanding the human organism and/or basal mechanisms underlying health and disease. The research fields include (but are not limited to): molecular biology, cell biology, bioinformatics, modelling of biological systems, enzymology, genetics, microbiology, pharmacology, experimental physiology, biophysics, biochemistry, biology, and biostatistics etc. The research will typically be carried out in animals, model systems, cellular or subcellular systems, or in silico.

The Novo Nordisk Foundation offer mutually exclusive calls within the areas listed below. It is the responsibility of the applicant to apply within the call most appropriate:

- Endocrinology and metabolism
- Clinical and translational medicine (for clinicians)
- Natural and technical sciences (NERD and RECRUIT)

1.3 THE RESEARCH LEADER PROGRAMME

To support the best and the most talented research leaders at all steps of their careers from start-up to established principal investigators, the Novo Nordisk Foundation offers three specific grants within the Research Leader Programme¹ (schematized below) to stimulate excellence and the possibility to pursue original and ambitious five-year projects. The calls ‘Emerging’, ‘Ascending’, and ‘Distinguished’ each target principal investigators at specific career-stages, and applicants are encouraged to familiarise themselves with the requirements in each call, to ensure they are eligible and apply for the appropriate call.



1.3.1 “DISTINGUISHED” PROFILE

The Distinguished Investigator grant is for leading professors who have demonstrated the ability to kindle and execute research at the highest international level. The Distinguished Investigator grant is for professors of all ages. Key is that the project is novel, excellent, has potential of high impact and is of a character that justifies a five-year grant of this magnitude.

1.4 ELIGIBILITY

Who can apply:

- Applicants must be professors (MSO included).
- Applicants must, during the project, be employed and have their primary research group in Denmark (only minor and/or time-limited affiliation with institutions abroad is allowed).
- This Distinguished Investigator call is intended for ‘full-time’ researchers (teaching obligations included) *i.e.*, *researchers with clinical obligations cannot apply for this grant.*
- The applicant cannot be a group leader in one of the Novo Nordisk Foundation research centres, where research support is included in the affiliation to the centre.
- The applicant cannot have a grant portfolio exceeding an annual total of DKK 4 million (including possible overhead) in the year of commencing the project.
- Recipients of this grant must contribute to the pre-graduate teaching environment at their host institution. A Distinguished Investigator grant must not be used to cover a teaching substitute for the applicant.

Where must the research take place:

- The project must be anchored at a university, hospital, or other non-profit research institution in Denmark. It is a requirement that the host institution confirms that the

¹ Read more about the programme and previous recipients at <https://researchleaderprogramme.com/>

project will take place at the given institution and that the institution will provide the required infrastructure, such as laboratory and office space, and administration of the grant. A hosting letter, signed by the head of the institute, must be included in the application.

What types of projects can be supported:

- The application must describe a clearly defined research project with an appropriate budget. The project can be an independent project, delimited project or a clearly defined part of a larger, running project. In the latter case, the large project must be briefly described.

Distinguished Investigator grants are individual grants at the disposal of the grant recipient. If the applied project involves collaboration, the collaboration and the nature of the collaboration should be described in the project description, but the grant recipient must be the clear driver of the project, and the applicant's research must be central to the project. Invitation of co-applicants is not possible within this call and merits of collaborators will not be assessed under the evaluation. Further, it is implicit that collaborators mentioned in the application support the application. Thus, upload of support letters from collaborators is not possible.

IMPORTANT RULES!

- An applicant may submit only one application to the Novo Nordisk Foundation for an "Investigator grant" and cannot submit another application for an "Investigator grant" while the application is under review. If an applicant submits more than one "Investigator grant" application for simultaneous review, only the first application submitted will be evaluated, while the subsequent applications will receive administrative rejections.
- An applicant that holds an active "Investigator grant" from the Novo Nordisk Foundation is only eligible to apply for a new "Investigator grant" during the final year of the existing grant, and the two grant periods cannot overlap. I.e., recipients of NNF Investigator Grants 2019 will be eligible to apply in the 2024 Investigator calls and not before.
- While a project submitted to one call in the Novo Nordisk Foundation is under evaluation – a similar or overlapping project CANNOT be submitted to other calls from the Novo Nordisk Foundation. I.e., projects submitted for Distinguished Investigator grants cannot be submitted to any other calls in the Novo Nordisk Foundation until the outcome of this call has been publicised.

"Investigator grants" in the Novo Nordisk Foundation are defined to include the following calls/grants across all funding areas: Emerging Investigator, Ascending Investigator, Distinguished Investigator, NNF Young Investigator Award, NNF Laureate research grants, RECRUIT and NERD.

1.5 FUNDING

A total of up to DKK 20 million is available for up to two 5-year grants, each of up to DKK 10 million with approximately DKK 2 million per year. Annual budget amounts can diverge from DKK 2 million per year if needed (e.g., due to equipment costs).

In the case of many applications of exceptionally high quality within one career stage within the Research Leader Programme, the committee may decide to transfer up to DKK 10 million from one career stage to another.

Applicants may apply for funding for the following types of expenses (see section 3.3. for details):

- salary for employees
- tuition fee
- operating expenses
- equipment
- conference participation
- travel
- publication costs
- bench fee
- direct administrative expenses (up to 5 % of the total funding applied for)

This grant cannot cover overhead and salary for the applicant.

The Novo Nordisk Foundation does not allow double funding of projects.

- The applicant cannot apply for projects/budget posts already funded by other mechanisms
- The project applied for can be partially funded by other mechanisms, but such co-funding must be clearly stated in the application.
- If the applicant, post application submission, receives funding for the project or parts of the applied project from others, the Novo Nordisk Foundation must be contacted as soon as possible.



The grant may not be used to cover 'overhead'

1.6 LANGUAGE

The application and any additional uploads must be written in English.

1.7 APPLICATION PROCESS

The application must be completed and submitted using NNF's online application and grant management system, NORMA, which can be accessed from:

<https://norma.novonordiskfonden.dk>

Further information on how to access and navigate in NORMA can be found in chapter 2.



After the final granting decision, applicants will be notified by e-mail, and a [list of all grant recipients](#) will be posted on our website.

All grant recipients must comply with the '[General Terms and Conditions](#)' when receiving a grant from the Novo Nordisk Foundation



NNF does not provide feedback in case an application is not selected for funding.

1.8 ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

All applications will be evaluated by the Novo Nordisk Foundation's [Committee on Bioscience and Basic Biomedicine](#) based on the following criteria:

- Quality of the research question and scientific impact
- Scientific approach
- Societal impact
- Past performance
- Research leadership and/or potential
- Collaboration and research environment

If you apply, while having active grants from NNF or other funders, you must state these grants in your CV including your time-commitment to them, and you should describe the synergy of the proposed project with the projects already funded. Failure to disclose active grant information and unrealistic time commitment to the proposed project will adversely affect the assessment.

The current funding situation of the applicant should not affect the score, but the Novo Nordisk Foundation does not allow double funding of projects and the level of commitment of the candidate to the project can be taken into consideration.

2 THE APPLICATION AND GRANT MANAGEMENT SYSTEM – NORMA

This section provides the technical guidance for how to access and navigate in the application and grant management system NORMA.

2.1 USER REGISTRATION

NORMA can be accessed through links on NNF's website or directly at: <https://norma.novonordiskfonden.dk>

Before you begin, please read the instructions on the login page.

If you do not have a user profile in NORMA, you can register by clicking on register as applicant. You will be asked to fill in a contact form, which will appear in a new window. The main applicant should only have one user profile. Use your work e-mail address for registration. After the registration, you will receive an e-mail with your username and password. You can now log in to NORMA. When you log in for the first time, you will be asked to change your password.

Applicants who have previously applied for a grant from NNF or have an active grant may already have a user profile in NORMA. If you are in doubt, an existing user profile can be retrieved by clicking FORGOT PASSWORD and entering an e-mail address. If you have a user profile in the system, you will receive an e-mail with login information and a new password within 5–10 minutes.

A registered user who submits an application is legally responsible for the truthfulness of the content of the application.

If you experience technical problems, please contact NORMA Support: norma-support@novo.dk.



An applicant cannot change the e-mail address provided at registration. Please contact NORMA Support if you need to change your e-mail address.

2.2 CREATING AN APPLICATION

To initiate a new application, you first need to identify the call and grant you wish to apply for. From the Applicant portal in NORMA, scroll down to the OPEN CALLS section, where all currently available calls are visible. Use the search filters at the top of the section to filter by e.g. overall funding area or geography.

Initiate an application by clicking the blue APPLY NOW button. Your draft application is then created and will remain a draft version until you actively submit the application.

You can create and subsequently edit a draft version of the application until the deadline. A draft application can be saved by clicking **SAVE DRAFT** and may be cancelled at any time up to the deadline by clicking the button **CANCEL APPLICATION**. An application is not submitted to NNF until an applicant has clicked **SUBMIT**.

The application comprises tabbed sheets that need to be completed but not necessarily in chronological order. Fields marked with a red star (*) are obligatory to fill in.

You can review the application at any time by clicking **OPEN** under **MY APPLICATIONS** on the Applicant Portal in NORMA. The whole application, including any currently entered data, can be downloaded as a PDF file by clicking on **APPLICATION PDF**. Make sure the PDF is readable and formatted appropriately before submitting your application.

2.3 TEXT, ILLUSTRATIONS and BUDGET

FILLING IN THE FIELDS

For all applications, the individual fields must be completed in accordance with these guidelines and the instructions supplied in NORMA.



To prevent loss of data, it is essential to press **SAVE DRAFT** before you leave NORMA or navigate in the system.

APPLICATION TEXTS

Text from Word, for example, can be copied and pasted into most text fields of the application. It is, however, important to check that formatting, special letters and symbols have not been converted or lost in the text fields after copying and pasting. If the formatting looks wrong in NORMA and in the PDF, you can try to change all text to “Normal” under the tab **FORMAT**.

The available functions for formatting text are at the top of the text fields. Some shorter text fields do not have the option to format.



For readability purposes, standard fonts, font size 11-12, and line spacing between 1.0 and 1.5 must be used.

ILLUSTRATIONS

Illustrations with figures, charts, tables, images etc. related to the project description can be uploaded under **PROPOSAL** (a maximum of four illustrations are allowed). Include the illustration number and a legend or caption for each illustration file when uploading. The illustrations will be integrated in the final application PDF.

The following file formats for illustrations are accepted in the system: JPG, JPEG, PNG and BMP. The maximum accepted size for each illustration is 1050*1650 pixels.

BUDGET

Before you begin to fill in the budget template, enter GRANT PERIOD START DATE and GRANT PERIOD END DATE under the PROJECT INFORMATION tab and press SAVE DRAFT. The budget must be entered in budget years following the grant period and not calendar years.

Complete the budget as follows:

- Click on the blue OPEN/EDIT icon to open a budget in a pop-up window.
- Click the + key to add budget rows.
- Select one of the budget headings, enter an amount under VALUE (DKK) and specify what the amount is for under DESCRIPTION.
- All amounts must be stated in Danish kroner (DKK) without decimal points, commas or spaces. NORMA automatically inserts the thousands separator.
- Save and close the budget spreadsheet by clicking save and close (in that order) and then return to the budget tab.

Important: If you make any changes to the grant period after filling out the budget, you must clear the budget table before making the change to the grant period.

2.4 SUBMITTING THE APPLICATION

The application in its entirety must be submitted electronically via the application system by clicking SUBMIT. It is not possible to submit an application or any part of it by standard mail or e-mail. Any material submitted outside the application system will not be included in the evaluation and will not be returned.

All applicants must read and accept NNF's Standards for Good Research Practice before submitting the application. A link can be found under "Policies" in the top right corner of the window. Further, the applicant must declare that the information provided in the application is true and accurate.

An application cannot be submitted unless all the required fields have been completed. Fields in the application that are incorrectly completed or incomplete will be listed in a box at the top of the screen. Clicking on each individual line marked in red takes you directly to the incomplete field. The box will disappear when you select SAVE DRAFT. This allows you to continue with the application and submission.



A list of any incorrect or incomplete entries will be autogenerated when you click SUBMIT. Amending incorrect or incomplete entries can be time-consuming, so we recommend submitting applications well before the deadline.

If you wish to modify a submitted application before the deadline, it is possible to reopen the application. Be aware that the application must be resubmitted before the deadline. Applications cannot be modified after the submission deadline.

Once the application has been submitted, a confirmation of receipt will be sent to the e-mail address used for logging into the system. If you do not receive a confirmation of receipt (please check your spam folder), you should contact NNF as soon as possible using the contact details on page 3.

If you wish to withdraw a submitted application after the deadline, you must contact NNF via e-mail, using the contact information on page 3.



Please remember to check that the PDF version of the application is legible and contains all entered information and uploads before submitting the application.

3 APPLICATION CONTENT

This section aids with essential information to include, and best practice of how to apply for this specific call.

3.1 APPLICANT

The applicant tab contains various sections with information about the main applicant:

- Personal information
- Educational information
- Current institution
- Experience
- Previous and Current Grants from NNF

MAIN APPLICANT

CV can be maximum 4,000 characters.

Please include in your CV:

- A short bibliographic overview summarizing total number of peer-reviewed publications, number of first authorships, number of corresponding authorships, number of citations, and H-index.
- An overview of your current grants and indicate how much of your research time (in %) is committed to each of the projects.
- A short paragraph on your teaching obligations. If no teaching obligations are presently in place, please provide a short teaching plan for the grant period.

Publication list can be a maximum of 5,000 characters.

First, applicants should include a link to an updated profile with a full publication list for the applicant on either Google Scholar, Web of Science, or Scopus. Below state up to the 10 most relevant publications for evaluating your merits. Include a complete specification of all authors for each publication with your own name highlighted.

Supplementary Information (under Applicant Information):

- Describe your terms of employment (where the project is to be carried out). MSO Professors should state the timeline of their MSO Professorship.
- State how much of your research time (in %) you intend to commit to the project applied for.
- Applicants who do not fit the 'Distinguished' profile and/or are borderline concerning the eligibility requirements described, must describe here why they consider themselves Distinguished Investigators.

PREVIOUS AND CURRENT GRANTS FROM NNF

If you have submitted other applications to NNF you must list them in the table ONLY if they are still under review and thus a granting decision has not yet been made, if so, summarize how the(se) application(s) are related to the current application.

If you have received any grants from NNF as an applicant or a co-applicant within the past five years, you must provide the application number, project title, grant period (in years), grant amount and the percentage share of the grant (100% if there is no co-applicant). Briefly summarize how any of the grants are related to the current application.

3.2 INSTITUTION

Please provide information about the institution where the grant will be administrated. This institution is where you will be employed during the grant period and the institution which will be responsible for budgeting, accounting and staff supported by the grant.



Registering a new administrating institution in NORMA can take up to two working days. The application can be edited but cannot be submitted before this information is registered. We therefore recommend that you register an administrating institution in good time.

3.3 PROPOSAL

Describe the project using the following fields on the PROPOSAL tab:

PROJECT TITLE

Please provide a short title for the project (maximum 150 characters, including spaces).

BRIEF PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Please provide a brief stand-alone summary of the project describing its purpose and primary methodologies and activities (maximum 2000 characters, including spaces).

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Can be a maximum of 30,000 characters. Please describe your proposed research project in detail – including purpose, background, state-of-the-art, methods, implementation, collaborations, and the significance of the project.

Please include a short paragraph of the synergy of the proposed project with project(s) already funded.

Abbreviations should be defined at the first use, and preferably a list of abbreviations should be included in the project description.

ILLUSTRATION UPLOADS

Up to four illustrations of 50 mb each can be uploaded to the project description. Preliminary data is encouraged. Accepted formats are .jpg, .png, .gif, .bmp.

LITERATURE REFERENCES

Please provide the reference information for the literature cited in the project description (maximum 8000 characters, including spaces).

LAY PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Please provide a brief summary in English for non-experts in lay language. The lay project description should be short and suitable for publishing on the Novo Nordisk Foundation/[Research Leader Programme](#) website in case the project is funded, and thus cannot contain confidential information (maximum 1000 characters, including spaces).



Please note that the application should address all the assessment criteria listed in subsection 1.8.

3.4 BUDGET

The budget only comprises the information entered in the BUDGET tab. Additional budget information attached under UPLOADS or added under other tabs than BUDGET will not be considered. The budget must be entered in budget years following the grant period and not calendar years.

GRANT PERIOD

Before you can fill in the budget template, start by entering the start and end dates for the grant under the PROJECT INFORMATION tab and press SAVE DRAFT. NORMA then generates a grant period in whole years, which is reflected in the budget template. The grant period is the duration of NNF's grant for the project.

Applicants may apply for funding for the following types of expenses:

- **Salary;** for research and technical assistance, including postdoctoral researchers, PhD students, technicians and research-year students. *Salary to cover employees can only be applied for if they are employed at a lower job structure/salary level than the grant recipient.*
- **Tuition fee;** for PhD students (up to DKK 80,000 per budget year) - must be specified separately in the budget.
- **Operating expenses;** e.g. lab consumables, chemicals and reagents, research animals, sequencing/proteomics and other analysis services directly related to the project.
- **Equipment;** required for the project, however not exceeding 20% of the budget total.
- **Conference participation** and/or leadership courses; Up to DKK 50.000 per budget year can be requested for travel and registration expenses in relation to presenting the project at conferences and workshops, or for the applicant's participation in leadership courses or workshops (e.g. EMBO laboratory Leadership Course or the Workshop on Leadership in Bioscience by Cold Spring Harbour Laboratory).
- **Travel;** travel expenses directly related to the project, i.e. experiments carried out in other labs for a limited period.
- **Publication costs;** of results emanating from the research project (up to DKK 50,000 per budget year).
- **Bench fee;** can be included in the budget for support of individual researchers to cover expenses needed to conduct the proposed research. Bench fee is calculated per academic employee actively working on the project and may only be used for expenses that are related to the research project and which cannot be included within another individual budget category. Maximum DKK 8.000 per month per FTE working on the project. The budget must specify the expenses covered by the bench fee, which may include:
 - Common or shared laboratory expenses and consumables
 - Laboratory utilities (electricity, gas, water)
 - Maintenance of essential equipment
 - Service contracts
 - Technical and IT support

(Note, that bench fee cannot cover rent, administrative support, representation, social contributions etc.)

To include a bench fee in the budget, the fee must be a part of the general expense policy of the administrating institution, and it must apply for all employees independently of funding source. Documentation that the administrating institution has a general bench fee policy should be included in the Hosting Letter from the

administrating institution enclosed as link or appendix. An unspecified bench fee without documentation will not be accepted.

- **Direct administrative expenses;** (up to 5 % of the funding applied for):
 - can cover non-scientific, administrative expenses in relation to the project, such as accounting, administration related to payment of salaries and purchasing, hiring, as well as auditing and financial reporting on the project
 - cannot cover administrative expenses that are not directly related to the project is not automatically included in the grant, and must be stated/applied for in the application budget, but should not be specified in detail

The Novo Nordisk Foundation does not allow double funding of projects.

- If the applicant has received funding for the project or parts of the project, this must be included in the budget and there can be no budgetary overlaps.
- If an identical or overlapping project proposal has been submitted to other funding institutions than the Novo Nordisk Foundation, it should be noted in the 'supplementary information' under the budget tab, and the overlapping budget posts should be specified.
- If the applicant, post application submission, receives funding for the project or parts of the applied project from others, the Novo Nordisk Foundation must be contacted as soon as possible.

Justification, explanation and comments to the budget can be entered in the SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION field. It is important that the requested funds are justified, well described and aligns with the described project.

Funding received for the applied project from the applicant's own organisation and/or from other sources should be entered under ADDITIONAL CONTRIBUTIONS FOR THE PROJECT. The amount entered should be the total sum for the entire grant period. It must be clearly described in the INFORMATION FOR ADDITIONAL CONTRIBUTIONS field what the additional contributions cover, and co-financing from the host institution is not an evaluation criterion.

If the applicant, after submitting the application, receives funding for the project or parts of the applied project from others, the NNF must be contacted as soon as possible.

3.5 APPENDICES

A hosting letter from the administration institution, signed by the head of the institute, must be included. The hosting letter should include:

- A confirmation from the host institution that they accept that the project will take place at the given institution and that the institution will provide the required infrastructure, such as laboratory and office space, and administration of the grant
- A confirmation that the host institution has agreed to the submitted budget and that the host institution will manage the potential grant according to this budget.
- A confirmation that the total external grant portfolio of the applicant does not exceed 4 Million DKK (not considering this application), in the year of commencing the project.
- In case the applicant is not a permanent employee at the host institution the terms of employment should be described. Also, if the applicant has multiple affiliations in addition to the one at the host institution (including affiliations to institutions abroad) the host institution must confirm the percentage time/affiliation that the applicant has to the host institution during the duration of this 5-year research project.

- If bench fee is applied for, include documentation that the host institution has a general bench fee policy (enclosed as link or appendix).

Please do not include other appendices.

All uploads must be in PDF format. NORMA automatically places these uploads at the end of the application.

October 2023

The Novo Nordisk Foundation

The Novo Nordisk Foundation is an independent Danish Foundation with corporate interests. The objective of the Novo Nordisk Foundation is twofold: To provide a stable basis for the commercial and research activities conducted by the companies within the Novo Group and to support scientific and humanitarian purposes.

The vision of the Novo Nordisk Foundation is to contribute significantly to research and development that improves the lives of people and the sustainability of society.