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Benefitting people and society

Guidelines for applicants
PROJECT GRANTS IN BIOSCIENCE AND BASIC BIOMEDICINE 2024

Facts about the call

Total amount available for granting:
DKK **98.5** million

Amount available per grant:
Up to DKK **3.5** million per grant

Call opens: Call closes:
27 June 2024   5 September, 2:00 PM CEST

Applicant notification:
December 2024

Earliest start date: Latest start date:
1 January 2025   31 December 2025

Review committee:
Committee on Bioscience and Basic Biomedicine

Contact:
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Grant Manager
E-mail: kro@novo.dk

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All Grant Recipients must comply with the 'General Terms and Conditions' for grants from the Novo Nordisk Foundation (the Foundation).

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

You can find more information about the Foundation's application and granting process at the NORMA Help Centre. Detailed information about the different parts of the application is available in NORMA.

1 Project Grants in Bioscience and Basic Biomedicine 2024

1.1 Purpose

The purpose of these grants is to broadly promote Danish fundamental research impacting better health through knowledge by supporting projects of high international level within the field of bioscience and basic biomedicine, which are relevant for understanding the human organism and/or the basal mechanisms underlying health and disease.

Not within the scope of this call
The Novo Nordisk Foundation offers similar calls for project grants within the five areas listed below. Projects focused on these five areas are not eligible for the Project Grants in Bioscience and basic biomedicine:

- Natural and Technical Sciences
- Endocrinology and Metabolism
- Clinical and Translational Medicine
- Industrial and Environmental Biotechnology
- Plant science, Agriculture, and Food Science

If the project applied for is borderline between bioscience and basic biomedicine and one of the areas above, you must carefully read the call text of both calls and decide where the project is best suited, and hence best evaluated.

You may submit only one application for one 'Project Grant' in either of these areas in 2024.

1.2 Areas of support

Bioscience and basic biomedicine include (but is 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.

Annual strategic focused theme

In 2024, up to DKK 10.5 million are earmarked for **'Regenerative medicine'** for individual projects of up to DKK 3.5 million.

Regenerative medicine represents an opportunity to develop regenerative therapies for diseases with a high unmet need. In addition, stem cells are a unique tool to model human disease for increased understanding of disease mechanisms as well as drug screening, and the quality of stem cell models is further enhanced by advances within tissue- and bioengineering and organoid technologies. A handful of gene and cell therapies have been approved for use in the clinic to treat rare disorders, however, translation of basic research and development of affordable and widely accessible regenerative medicine therapies are still a challenge.

To qualify for the earmarked sum, the project should be within stem cell biology, cell therapy, or tissue-/bioengineering, with the aim to model human disease in order to increase disease understanding and/or enable drug screening, with the aim to develop improved therapies for human disease. Projects focused on non-immune cell-based therapy will be prioritised over projects on immune cell-based therapy.

If you wish your application to be considered for the 2024 theme, you must indicate this in your application by ticking the box 'Regenerative medicine' found under the tab 'Proposal' in the application system.

1.3   Eligibility

- Principal investigators anchored in Denmark are eligible to apply - i.e. experienced independent researchers, who have already established their own line of research or researchers that are in the process of establishing themselves as independent researchers.

- The research activities applied for must be anchored at a university, hospital or other non-profit research institution in Denmark.

- 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.

- Co-applicants are not allowed within this call.

- Applications from Ph.D. students and postdocs will not be taken into consideration.

- Salary of the grantee cannot be covered in this grant. The applicant must be guaranteed her/his own salary for the entire applied project period, and this must be confirmed in the hosting letter from the administering institution.

Project grants in bioscience and basic biomedicine are individual grants at the disposal of the applicant. If the applied project involves collaboration, the collaboration and the nature of the collaboration should be described in the project description, but the applicant must be the clear driver of the project, and the applicant's research must be central to the project.

IMPORTANT RULES

- If an applicant holds an active "Project Grant in Bioscience and Basic Biomedicine", the applicant is eligible to apply for a new grant during the final year of the existing grant. However, the grant period for the new project cannot overlap with that of the active grant.

- An applicant that holds an active "Project Grant" awarded by a specific committee may apply for another "Project Grant" if it is awarded by a different committee, is for a different purpose/project, and if it is not within the same calendar year.

- An applicant may not submit identical/very overlapping proposals to different NNF calls within the same calendar year.

1.4   Funding

A total of up to DKK 98.5 million is available for grants between DKK 300,00 and DKK 3.5 million for projects lasting from 1 year to up to 3 years.

Included in the total grant capital of DKK 98.5 million is DKK 10.5 million reserved for grants within the annual strategic theme.

Applicants may apply for funding for the following types of expenses directly related to the project:
- Salary for employees (such as research and technical assistance, postdoctoral researchers, PhD students, technicians and research-year students). Salary expenses cannot cover the main applicant or project employees of similar or higher academic employment level as the main applicant.
- Tuition fee (up to DKK 80,000 per year per PhD student)
- Operating expenses
- Equipment (up to DKK 200,000 per budget year)
- Conference participation (up to DKK 25,000 per budget year)
- Travel
- Publication costs (up to DKK 50,000 per budget year)
- Project supplement for research grants (Danish universities only)
- Bench fee (not applicable to Danish universities)
- Administrative support (not applicable to Danish universities)

Full-time equivalents (FTEs)
For each salary entry, please specify the FTE in years within the designated FTE field. This will indicate the proportion of a full-time position that the project funding will support for each year of the grant period. One full-time employee for one year equals 1.0 FTE.

Bench fee (not applicable to Danish universities)
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. It may only be used for expenses related to the research project, which cannot be included within another individual budget category. Bench fee may account for a maximum of DKK 8,000 per month per FTE. 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

PLEASE NOTE that bench fee cannot cover rent, administrative support, representation, social contributions etc. A valid bench fee policy in line with the Foundation's requirements must be available at the time of application, and this official documentation from the administrating/co-applicant's institution must be provided upon request.

Project supplement for research grants: (Danish universities only)
The project supplement contributes to the coverage of indirect costs at Danish universities, and replaces budget posts such as administrative costs, bench fee and parental leave.

More information on the joint model for project supplement is found at Universities Denmark's website. Questions related to the project supplement should be directed to the research support units at your university.

Administrative support (not applicable to Danish universities)
Administrative support may account for a maximum of 5% of the total budget and must be included therein. The administrative support:
- can cover expenses such as for accounting, payment of salaries, purchasing, hiring, as well as auditing and financial reporting on the project
- cannot cover administrative expenses that are not directly related to the project

- can via the host institution be shared between the institutions of the main- and co-applicant(s), as detailed in the application budget
- is not automatically included in the grant and must be stated/applied for in the application budget but should not be specified in detail
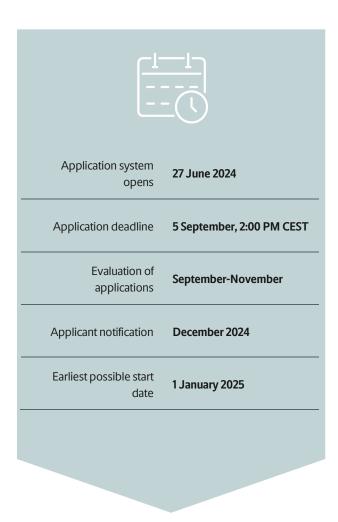
The Foundation will not award funding for:
- Commercial activities
- Overhead/indirect costs (such as rent, electricity, water and maintenance)
- Double funding of projects:
  - If the applicant has received funding for the proposed project from other sources, in part or in full, this must be accounted for in the budget, as no budgetary overlaps are allowed
  - If an identical or overlapping project proposal has been submitted to other funding institutions than the Foundation, it must be noted in the application
  - If the applicant receives funding for the project, or parts of the project, from other sources following submission of the application to the Foundation, the Foundation must be informed immediately

1.5   Language

The application and all additional materials must be submitted in English.

1.6   Application process

Application system opens	**27 June 2024**
Application deadline	**5 September, 2:00 PM CEST**
Evaluation of applications	**September-November**
Applicant notification	**December 2024**
Earliest possible start date	**1 January 2025**

When all applications have been assessed, applicants will be notified whether they have been awarded a grant. The notification e-mail will be sent from norma-noreply@novo.dk to the e-mail address used when creating a profile in NORMA.

PLEASE NOTE: The Foundation does not provide feedback in case an application is declined.

1.7   Assessment criteria

NNF's Committee on Bioscience and Basic Biomedicine will primarily assess the applications based on the following criteria:
- Scientific originality and relevance
- Scientific or broader societal impact
- Scientific approach
- Scientific environment and collaboration
- Background and expertise (relative to career stage) of the applicant.

Partial randomisation:
During a trial period in 2022-2024, the grant selection procedure will encompass two parallel schemes: 1) Traditional committee-based evaluation and 2) Partial randomisation.

For both schemes, all applications are assessed by the committee and categorised as either "*high quality*" (fundable) or "*non-meritorious*" (not fundable). Only applications categorised as fundable will undergo further evaluation and potentially be selected for granting through either scheme 1) with traditional committee-based evaluation or scheme 2) with partial randomisation.

Those fundable applications that are unanimously evaluated by the committee as highest ranked will be granted. The remaining fundable applications, "the grey zone", will undergo further normal assessment by the committee (scheme 1). In parallel to scheme 1, the applications allocated to the grey zone will undergo a randomisation process where all applications from the grey zone (including those selected by Scheme 1) will be randomly selected for funding, one application at a time, until the same total number of applications is reached through scheme 2 as selected for funding through scheme 1.

Successful applicants will not be informed about which scheme their application was selected through.

The purpose of implementing partial randomisation in the evaluation procedure is to test new ways of grant-giving and generate new knowledge on open competition funding of research projects.

Other active grants:
If you have an active grant from NNF, this may be taken into consideration in the evaluation of your application for a new grant. In general, it is recommended that the main applicant has delivered results on the active grant(s) before submission of a new application to the Foundation. If you apply, while having an active grant from the Foundation, you must describe how the project you propose in this application is different from and/or coherent with the project(s) already funded and briefly describe the progress of the already funded project(s). This information should be included in the **Project Description**.

Specifically, if you hold an Emerging, Ascending or Distinguished Investigator grant within bioscience and basic biomedicine, we recommended that you at the earliest apply for a project grant when you have completed the third year of the investigator grant.

Having active grants from other public or private funders will not be disadvantageous for your application for a "Project Grant in Bioscience and Basic Biomedicine". However, the synergy of the proposed project with related already funded projects should be described.

2 The application and grant management system NORMA

2.1   Creating and submitting an application

The Foundation uses the application and grant management system NORMA:
https://norma.novonordiskfonden.dk

If you do not have a user profile in NORMA, you can create one by clicking **Register** on the login page. The main applicant should only have one user profile. Please use your work e-mail address for registration.

The registered user who submits an application will be legally responsible for the truthfulness of the content of the application.

You can find guidance on how to create and submit an application at: NORMA Help Centre.

If you experience technical problems and cannot find a solution in the NORMA Help Centre, please contact NORMA Support: norma-support@novo.dk.

3 Application content

This section provides guidelines on the content required in the sections of the online application form for this call. Detailed information about the different parts of the application is available in NORMA.

3.1 Applicant

The **Applicant** tab pertains to information about all those involved in an application, meaning the main applicant or contact person applying on behalf of an organisation/institution as well as any co-applicants.

CV can be maximum 4,000 characters.
Please include a short bibliographic overview summarising total number of peer-reviewed publications, number of first authorships, number of corresponding authorships, number of citations, and H-index. Also address your education, research and professional affiliations, funding, awards/prizes, teaching roles and administrative experience.

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). Non-permanent employees should indicate when their current contracts are running out and how their salaries are covered. Tenure-track employees should indicate when they are up for tenure.
- Include an overview of your current active grants and indicate how much of your research time (in %) is committed to each of the projects already funded
- State how much of your research time (in %) you intend to commit to the project applied for.

Previous and current grants from NNF
If you have submitted other applications to the Foundation, 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 you have received any grants from the Foundation 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 summarise 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 administered. This institution is where the main applicant will be employed during the grant period, and the institution that will ultimately be responsible for administering and allocating the grant, including budgeting, financial reporting and staff supported by the grant.

It can take up to five working days to register a new administrating institution in NORMA.
The application cannot be submitted before the institution has been registered.

3.3   Proposal

Describe the project using the fields in 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 2,000 characters, including spaces, line breaks and special characters).

PROJECT DESCRIPTION
Successful applications describe focused projects, feasible within the budget, timeframe and the manpower requested (maximum 20,000 characters, including spaces, line breaks and special characters).

Please consider the following:
- Describe your proposed research project in detail – including purpose, state-of-the-art, background, methods, implementation, novelty, feasibility, and the significance of the project.
- If the applied project involves collaboration, the nature of collaboration and the role of the collaborator should be described in the project description.

- Include a short paragraph of the synergy of the proposed project with ongoing project(s) and already funded activities.
- You are encouraged to include and describe preliminary data.
- Up to four illustrations (figures, tables, diagrams etc.) can be uploaded. Please only include illustrations relevant for the assessment of your application. Inclusion of a Gantt Chart and preliminary data as figures are welcomed.
- In case you are submitting a project proposal, which has been submitted to NNF before, please clearly describe what has changed/improved in the application/project.
- Abbreviations should be defined at the first use, and preferably a list of abbreviations should be included in the project description.

ILLUSTRATION UPLOADS
A maximum of four illustrations can be uploaded here.

The following file formats for illustrations are accepted in the system: JPG, JPEG, PNG and BMP. The maximum accepted size for each illustration is 50 MB and 1050*1650 pixels.

LITERATURE REFERENCES
Please provide the reference information for the literature cited in the project description (maximum 8,000 characters, including spaces, line breaks and special characters). To simplify and shorten the entries, include only first author (Author last name, first name/or initials) + et al. References should always include year, article title, journal name and volume/issue number and DOI or URL.

LAY PROJECT DESCRIPTION
Please provide a brief summary for non-experts in lay language. If the application is awarded a grant, the text may be used for publication (must be in English, maximum 1,000 characters, including spaces, line breaks and special characters).

3.4   Budget

Enter the project grant period, and the budget template will become available. Only budget information submitted via the **Budget** tab will be considered in the review process. Any additional budget information attached under **Appendices** (or any other tabs) will not be considered.

The total amount applied for per project should be within the frame of DKK 300,000 – 1,160,000 per budget year and must be within the total budget frame of DKK 300,000 – 3,500,000.

A one-year project can receive a maximum of DKK 1,160,000 in funding, a two-year project a maximum of DKK 2,320,000, and a three-year project a maximum of DKK 3,500,000 in funding, however small deviations from DKK 1,160,000 per budget year are acceptable.

3.5   Appendices

Hosting letter (limit of 1 upload) from the administering host institution, signed by the head of the institute. The hosting letter must confirm the following:

- that the host institution accepts 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.
- that the host institution has agreed to the submitted budget and that the host institution will manage the potential grant according to this budget.
- the terms of employment at the host institution should be described, incl. that the main applicant's employment and/or funding for the main applicant's salary is secured.

All uploads must be in PDF format. NORMA automatically places these uploads at the end of the application. Appendices other than those specified here are not permitted and will not be included in the evaluation.