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Guidelines for applicants

COLLABORATIVE RESEARCH PROGRAMME 2025

DATA SCIENCE

Facts about the call

Total amount available for granting:
Up to DKK 91 million

Amount available per grant:
Up to DKK 40 million

Call opens:
December 2024

Call closes:
04 March 2025 at 14:00 (CET)

Applicant notification:
December 2025 (non-shortlisted applicants will be notified of the status of their applications in early June 2025)

Interview:
September 2025 (only shortlisted candidates will be invited for interview, the date for interview to be confirmed upon invitation)

Earliest start date:
01 January 2026

Latest start date:
01 December 2026

Review committee: Committee for Data Science

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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 DATA SCIENCE COLLABORATIVE RESEARCH PROGRAMME 2025

1.1 Purpose

The Data Science Collaborative Research Programme aims to support synergistic research collaborations rooted in data science and computational science with immediate or potential future applications within areas of relevance to NNF's Strategy.

The goals of the Data Science Collaborative Research Programme are:

- To foster research collaborations between data scientists
- To support research collaborations between data scientists and experts in other fields, including but not limited to medicine, biology, biotechnology, physics, chemistry, etc.
- To support an excellent academic research and education ecosystem within data science in Denmark
- To advance education and training courses in data science-related topics in Denmark

1.2 Areas of support

Research proposal eligible for funding should address:

a. Development of new algorithms, methods and technologies within data science or computational science, artificial intelligence (incl. machine learning and deep learning), statistics, bioinformatics, and other computational sciences (incl. mathematical modelling, simulations, cybersecurity etc.)

and/or

b. Applications of data science and computational sciences to areas of relevance to NNF's strategy and grant awarding activities, including life science, biomedical- and health science, public- and global health, infectious disease, sustainability, green transition, agriculture, as well as natural and technical sciences.

For projects mainly concerned with methods development, it is important that the applicants argue convincingly for potential application and impact within NNF's scientific focus areas.

Vice versa, projects that have their primary focus on the application side must describe and explain the novelty and impact of their data- and computational science approach, be it development of novel methods or novel applications of existing methods.

It is recognised that data science application and maturity will differ between disciplines and applicants within biotechnology and natural sciences are also encouraged to apply.

In general, projects without potential applications within NNF's scientific focus areas and projects with no novelty in terms of development or application of computational methods should not be funded in this programme. Projects where the primary focus is on financial or insurance, fraud detection, advertisement, commercial analysis, telecommunication, mass surveillance, defence, gaming, etc., are considered outside of scope and will not be considered for funding, unless the applicants can convincingly argue for relevance and potential impact within the Foundation's scientific focus areas.

1.3 Eligibility

The main applicant or at least one of the co-applicants must be a data science or computational science researcher who is actively engaged in research and teaching activities at an academic institution in Denmark during the project period. The main applicant can be either a computational researcher (data scientist) or a researcher from a relevant application domain (medicine, agriculture, physics, etc.).

The project may include up to 5 co-applicants.
The proposed research project should demonstrate synergistic collaboration between different research groups, typically from different institutions/departments and different scientific disciplines. A project solely with applicants from the same institutional department or within the same scientific research domain is generally not within the scope of this call.

Please note, consortia where all, or the vast majority of, the computational work is planned to be undertaken abroad are not eligible to apply for this programme.

Collaboration with industry is possible. Please note, in this case, funding *cannot* be awarded directly to industry partner(s), unless these partners act as sub-contractors (e.g., consultants, service providers, vendors, etc.). In case of industry collaboration, it is important to demonstrate the synergy that will be achieved through the collaboration and to show how the collaboration is timely and appropriate for the project.

To receive funding, co-applicant(s) must be listed in the application as a "co-applicant" and the distribution of funding must be detailed in the budget. Furthermore, the roles of the co-applicant(s) in the project must be clearly described in the project description.

Additional co-applicants or collaborators (in addition to the 5 co-applicants) are allowed. However, these cannot receive funding from the programme.

Place of employment and institutional anchoring

The main applicant should be at least 70% associated with/employed at a Danish university, hospital, or other non-profit organisation, that will be considered the administrating institution of the grant. The co-applicant(s) can be anchored in Denmark or abroad.

A hosting letter signed by the head of the department/institute at the administrating Danish institution must be provided in the Appendices. The letter should confirm that the host institution will provide the required infrastructure, laboratory, and office facilities, as well as administration of the grant.

General rules and restrictions for applications

It is possible for researchers to apply for several Data Science Open-Competition calls (as either a main or co-applicant). However, the following restrictions apply:

- **An applicant may submit only one application per call as "main applicant".** The main applicant can participate as a "co-applicant" on other applications within the same call, however, the projects that the applicant participates in cannot overlap.
- **A main applicant can only be awarded *one* Data Science open competition (Collaborative Research Programme or Investigator Programme) grant from NNF within a given year.** Thus, if a Collaborative Research Programme application is awarded, the main applicant will not be eligible to receive funding for a Data Science Investigator grant in the same year.
    - Co-applicants may apply for a Data Science Investigator grant but must clearly indicate which other submitted proposals to NNF include them as a main or co-applicant.
    - Applications should not be contingent on each other, and any overlap in the project description should be indicated clearly.
- **At any given time, the main applicant may only have *one* Data Science Open-Competition (Collaborative Research Programme or Investigator Programme) application *under evaluation*.** If the applicant submits more than one application, only the first application submitted will be evaluated, while any subsequent applications will receive an administrative rejection. After having received notification on the funding decision, the applicant may submit a new application for a Data Science grant.
    - Please note, applicants to the NNF Data Science Collaborative Research Programme will be informed of whether they proceed to the second stage of the evaluation process in early June 2025. *If the application does not proceed to the second stage of the evaluation process, applicants will be notified by e-mail and can withdraw the application and submit another application to the NNF Data Science Investigator Programme, which has a deadline on 29 July 2025*.
- It is possible for a main applicant on an active Collaborative Research grant to be a co-applicant on an application submitted by another eligible applicant.

- Researchers who have already been awarded a Data Science Collaborative Research Project grant, or an Investigator Grant[1], from NNF (as grant recipient or main applicant) are not eligible to apply for another grant under this programme as the main applicant, until the last year of the grant period for the active grant.
- Please refer to our general terms and conditions (https://novonordiskfonden.dk/en/conditions-for-grants/) for further information when applying for/receiving a grant from NNF.

1.4 Funding

The total annual grant budget for the 2025 Data Science Collaborative Research Programme is up to DKK 91 million.

Each grant can be up to DKK 40 million, with a maximum duration of 5 years, and minimum duration of 4 years.

The maximal size of the grant scales with the size of the collaborative consortia (maximally DKK 14 million for 2 partners, DKK 20 million for 3 partners, DKK 28 million for 4 partners, and DKK 40 million for 5 partners).

Applicants may apply for funding for the following types of expenses directly related to the project:

- Salary for scientific employees
- Salary for technical/administrative staff
- Salary for research secretary
- Tuition fee for PhD students up to DKK 80,000 per year per student
- Operating expenses, including materials, consumables, and services.
- Equipment and hardware required for the project. Costs may include acquisition, installation, implementation, service contracts, software, etc.
- Infrastructure establishment and installation
- Data management
- Collaborative activities
- Conference participation
- Publication costs
- Project Supplement only available for Danish Universities. More information is below.
- Bench fee not applicable for Danish Universities. More information is below.
- Administrative expenses not applicable Danish Universities. More information is below.

NB: Salaries for main applicant or co-applicants cannot be covered.

[1] "**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, Start Package, and NERD.

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 [eligible to apply for salary]. 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
  - Please note that each application must be unique and tailored to the specific call for proposals. The Novo Nordisk Foundation will not accept or consider identical applications submitted by different individuals to separate active calls. Each submission should demonstrate originality and relevance to the objectives outlined in the respective call. Applications found to be identical to those submitted, even if to a different call, will be automatically rejected without review.

1.5 Language

The application and all additional materials must be submitted in English. The language chosen will not influence the assessment of the application.

1.6 Application process

Application system opens	**December 2024**
Application deadline	**04 March 2025**
Evaluation of applications	**March – May 2025**
Applicant shortlist notification	**Early June 2025**
Interviews for shortlisted applications	**September 2025**
Applicant notification	**December 2025**
Earliest possible start date	**01 January 2026**

The application process consists of 2 Phases:

- **Phase 1**, in which a full application, limited to 30,000 characters, should be submitted.
- After review and discussion in the committee, the top ranked applicants are invited for **Phase 2**, in which they will present and discuss their proposed research projects with the review committee at the Novo Nordisk Foundation.

In early June 2025, applicants who were *not selected for progression to Phase 2 (interviews)* of the Data Science Collaborative Research Programme will be notified about the outcome of their application. These applicants will have an option to apply to the NNF Data Science Investigator Programme which has an application deadline on 29 July 2025.

When all applications have been assessed, applicants will be notified about 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 for Data Science will primarily assess the applications based on the following criteria:

The NNF's Committee for Data Science, consisting of 10 international experts within the field, performs a scientific evaluation and prioritisation of the applications based on the following criteria:

- The project's originality, ambition, expected outcome, and differentiation from the current state-of-the-art in its field.
- The feasibility of the proposed project.
- The scientific qualifications and contributions of the collaborators.
- Managerial and scientific qualifications of the programme leader/main applicant.
- The collaborative approach, including the overall synergy, the work plan, and distribution between the collaborators.
- Alignment of the proposed research with the Foundation's strategy and grant awarding priorities.
- The plans for contributing to data science and computational science teaching at Danish universities, including the teaching portfolio and qualifications of the applicants and the potential for translating the proposed research into data science teaching programmes and/or training initiatives at Danish universities.
- The financial situation and prior obligations of the programme leader, in case it can compromise the dedication to, and quality of, the proposed project.
- If the project supports open and reproducible science by sharing code and data, including adherence to the FAIR data principles.

Other grants from NNF
If you have an active grant from the Foundation, 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**.

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**: (A maximum of 4,000 characters, including spaces)
  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-index, etc. Applicants are strongly encouraged to provide a link to an updated profile with a full publication list on, e.g., ORCID, Google Scholar, Web of Science, or Scopus.
- **Publication list**: (A maximum of 5,000 characters, including spaces)
  Please only include the 10 most relevant publications for evaluating your merits. Include a complete specification of all authors for each publication with your own name highlighted.
- **Summary of own research**: (A maximum of 2,000 characters, including spaces)
  Please provide a short summary of your research and explain how the past years of research fit into the current proposal and collaboration.
- **Previous and current grants from NNF**: If you have previously submitted other applications in the same calendar year, summarize how these applications 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 these grants are related to the current application.

3.2 Co-applicant(s)

For this call, up to 5 co-applicants are allowed for the application. Co-applicants are expected to actively participate in organising and implementing the project and should, consequently, be allocated a share of the grant. The project description should clearly describe the role of all co-applicants, and the budget should clearly indicate the co-applicants' allocation of the total budget. Co-applicants must be invited through NORMA and subsequently enter their details in the system. Please follow the instructions in NORMA on how to invite co-applicants to your application.

Please note that co-applicants can read, edit and upload information into the application portal, **but only the main applicant is able to submit the final application.**

Inviting co-applicants can be time-consuming.
Please invite any co-applicant(s) as soon as possible and well in advance of the submission deadline.

3.3 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.

3.4 Proposal

Describe the project using the fields in the **Proposal** tab.

PHASE 1: FULL APPLICATION

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, target group and activities, including the major challenge and knowledge gaps being addressed, overall purpose and expected outcomes.
(Maximum 2,000 characters, including spaces, line breaks and special characters).

PROJECT DESCRIPTION (maximum 30,000 characters, including spaces, line breaks and special characters).

When writing the project proposal, please consider adhering to the following structure and content (if possible, we recommend following them in the given order and with the given headlines):

- **Purpose** [Briefly mention the main objective for the proposal, but keep it concise, simple, and precise].
- **Background and State-of-the-art** [Provide a short description of the current status and state-of-the-art within the field or topic of your proposal, in terms of existing knowledge, data, methods, frameworks, results, etc.].
- **Central hypothesis and research idea** [Briefly describe the central hypothesis or idea of the project and emphasize how your project is different from and complementary to the existing state-of-the-art, current knowledge, etc. Essentially, what the novelty and value of your proposal are and how it will fill gaps in existing research or knowledge].
- **Expected outcome(s)** [Describe the expected outcomes of your project short-term, medium-term, and long-term].
- **Methods**:
    - **Domain-specific methods** [Your application should describe the relevant "domain-specific" methods (besides the specific data science methods) needed to conduct the research programme, such as for instance the computational or experimental methods used for generation of new data, overall data collection and curation, the theoretical foundations of a mechanistic model etc.].
    - **Data Science methods** [Your application should explain how your project and collaboration contribute to the development of new data science methods and/or to applications of existing methods in new areas and new ways. The methods and algorithms must be described and/or referred to in a level of detail which enables the committee to assess 1) what they entail, 2) their relevance to the problems being addressed, 3) their potential limitations, and 4) their potential use for other applications. We recommend highlighting

which methods, algorithms and approaches are currently considered state-of-the-art within the domain(s) of the project as a basis for explaining how your approach builds on, relates to, uses and/or extends beyond the state-of-the-art, to demonstrate how the project will bring novelty in terms of development of new data science methods or new impactful applications of established methods].

- **Preliminary results/feasibility** [You should not assume that all committee members will be familiar with all relevant prior work – by you or others – in your specific field or domain. If you have (or know of) preliminary results, data or methods that support the validity and/or feasibility of what you propose in your application, we strongly recommend that you describe and/or refer to these in your full application].
- **Scientific impact, novelty, and significance of the project** [The novel/innovative aspects of the project should be clear from your application. This applies to the originality of the problem, the approach, the methods, the data, the results and/or the impact. This will usually entail highlighting what already exists and/or is the current practice].
    - **Advancements in the domain** [Please formulate how the project outcome is expected to advance the domain area(s)].
    - **Advancements in the use of data science** [Please state how the project outcome is expected to advance data science within the domain area(s) and/or data science more broadly].
- **Strategic impact of the project**
    - **Impact within Novo Nordisk Foundation strategic areas** [It is important to clearly state the future applications of your proposed research project (e.g., a new data science method), to demonstrate that you have considered a plausible path from your research to the societal impact you claim it could have. This is particularly important if the envisioned impact of your project is not immediately obvious and/or lies beyond the time frame or scope of your project itself.]
- **Workplan and collaborator contributions** [Describe the work plan with timeline and work packages, potentially accompanied by a Gantt chart, an illustration or similar, as well as the contributions, roles, synergies, and responsibilities of the partners in the project. Explain why the chosen consortium is suited to take on this project.]
- **Teaching** [How the proposed research will translate into teaching activities rooted in data science or computational science must be described (undergraduate courses, graduate courses, vocational training, BSc and MSc study lines, etc.)].

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).

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 (maximum 1,000 characters, including spaces, line breaks and special characters).

PHASE 2: INTERVIEW

Only applicants selected by the Committee for progression to Phase 2 will be invited for an interview with the Committee for Data Science. More information will be shared with selected applicants.

We recommend that all co-applicants involved in the collaborative research consortium participate in the interview. This collaborative project relies on the participation and expertise of all members. If any co-applicants are unable to attend, it is essential that a consortium member with the relevant expertise represents the project, particularly ensuring that the data science expertise is covered. The interview team must be prepared to address questions on all aspects of the application, ensuring comprehensive coverage of the group's collaborative efforts.

3.5 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.

3.6 Appendices

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.

- Hosting letter (limit of 1 upload)
- *If relevant*, support/approval letters or permits regarding the data to be used in the project should also be included.