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Guidelines for applicants

# INFECTIOUS DISEASES CATALYST GRANTS 2026

## Facts about the call

Total funding amount available:
DKK 60 million

Main applicant must be based at a Nordic institution; co-applicants can be based anywhere globally, but must be based in a different country to the main applicant

Amount available per grant:
Up to DKK 4 million per grant for projects with a single applicant (one PI)
Up to DKK 7 million per grant for collaborative projects (one PI plus one co-PI)

Call opens:
1 March 2026

Call closes:
19 May 2026, 2pm Copenhagen time

Notification of outcome:
October 2026

Earliest start date:
1 November 2026

Latest start date:
1 October 2027

**Review committee:**
NNF Committee for Infectious Diseases

**Contact:**

Frederikke Stoustrup
Grant Specialist
E-mail: frs@novo.dk

Jamie Batchelor
Grant Manager
E-mail: jar@novo.dk

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 system and grant process at the NORMA Help Centre. Detailed information about the different parts of the application system is available in NORMA.

# 1 Infectious Diseases – Catalyst Grants

## 1.1 Purpose and Scope

Infectious diseases are global problems that can spread fast and far and disproportionally affect vulnerable populations. Combatting infectious diseases requires high quality, globally affordable, and accessible medical countermeasures (e.g. vaccines, diagnostics and therapeutics). The purpose of the "Infectious Diseases – Catalyst Grants" programme is to provide ***catalytic funding for exploratory, use-inspired, and innovative research projects that have exceptional potential for future direct impact on global challenges within human infectious diseases***. In 2026, projects submitted to this call for applications must be within one of the two scientific themes:

### 1.1.1 Theme 1: Novel AMR tools

The current clinical pipeline for tools to combat antimicrobial resistance (AMR) is inadequate and urgently requires new and innovative solutions. ***Projects supported under this theme should investigate rationally designed and novel approaches to prevent, diagnose or treat antimicrobial resistant bacterial infections***. Pathogens listed on the WHO Bacterial Priority Pathogen List, 2024 will be prioritised.

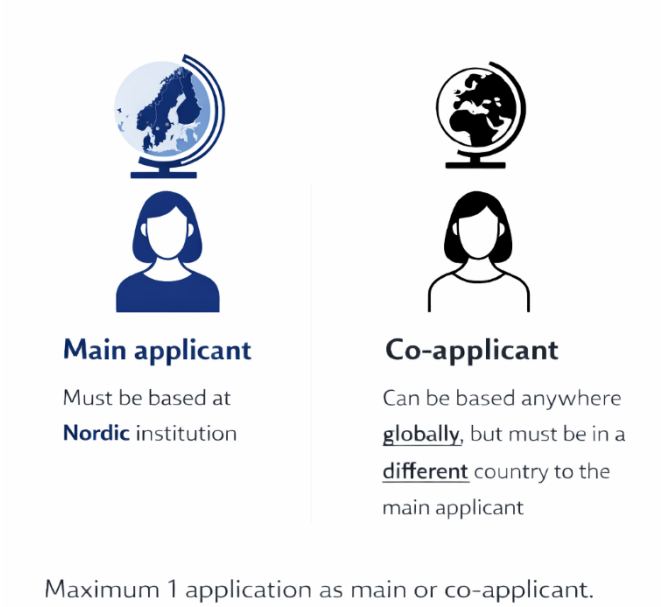
### 1.1.2 Theme 2: Pandemic Influenza

Pandemic influenza remains a substantial threat to public health. There is an urgent need for a deeper understanding of the factors that influence viral infectivity, transmission, and disease severity in humans. ***Projects supported under this theme should address major research gaps in our understanding of pandemic influenza and interactions with the human host and aid the development of tools to prevent or combat infections effectively.***

**Out of scope**: Projects which are mainly focused on surveillance, establishment/maintaining infrastructure (incl. databases and algorithms), clinical trial(s), microbiome research, phage therapy, as well as projects not directly related to human health. For-profit product development projects are ineligible.

## 1.2 Eligibility

- The **main applicant** must be anchored and have their primary employment and research group at a university, hospital, or other non-profit research institution in a **Nordic country**. The eligible countries are listed here: The Nordic Countries.
- The **main applicant** must be employed at the institution they are applying from and must be guaranteed their own salary for the entire project period.
- The **main applicant** must be at assistant professor, associate professor, or professor (or similar levels). Applications from postdocs or Ph.D. students are not accepted. Early career-stage group-leaders as well as women and other groups that have been historically under-represented in scientific research are strongly encouraged to apply and to be included as co-applicants.
- A **main applicant** (or a **co-applicant**) can only submit/be part of **one application** to the 2026 "Infectious Diseases – Catalyst Grants Call" and cannot be an applicant on a different application. Researchers who hold an active "Infectious Diseases Catalyst Grant" cannot apply until they are in the final year of their existing Catalyst grant, and the grant period for a new project cannot overlap with that of the active grant.
- One **co-applicant** can be included per application. If included, the co-applicant must be anchored and have their primary employment and research group at a university, hospital, or other non-profit research organisation outside of the country of the main applicant (no further geographical restrictions). The co-applicant must significantly contribute to the scientific advancement of the project and receive a significant part of the funding. Further, it must be clear from the application how the project collaboration is ensured, and the work and budget is distributed.
- The **project** must be in scope of at least one of the two 2026 research themes and it must be use-inspired i.e., the research project must enhance fundamental knowledge and include considerations of potential application/translation of the knowledge gained towards generating better and needed tools. The scientific rationale, concept, and research direction should be driven by the potential use and/or translation of that knowledge. The application should have clear aims/goals, and articulate the expected outcomes catalysed by this project, and the potential future impact of these outcomes beyond this project.
- The **project** must not be identical/ overlapping in scope to other proposals submitted to and evaluated during overlapping timeframes in other NNF open call programmes.
- Collaboration with **for-profit research partners** (biotech, industry etc.) is possible, but funding cannot be awarded to for-profit research partner(s), unless they act as sub-contractors (e.g., consultants, service providers, vendors, etc.).




## 1.3 Funding

A total of DKK 60 million is available for proposals in this call in 2026.

The individual grants awarded can have one of two different granting frameworks:

1) For each grant where there is only one applicant who is based in the Nordics, up to DKK 4 million can be awarded, with a grant period of up to 3 years.
2) For each grant where there is a Nordic main applicant and a co-applicant based in a different country, up to DKK 7 million can be awarded, with a grant period of up to 3 years. The budget does not have to be split evenly between the main and co-applicant institutions, but if one institution will receive significantly more funding, a clear justification must be provided.

**Projects should be requesting appropriate funds to achieve tangible objectives within a feasible timeframe.** Applicants may apply for funding for the following types of expenses directly related to the project:

- **Salary of people employed by or involved in the project** such as postdocs, PhD students, researchers, staff scientists, consultants, technicians, etc.
- If required by the foreign institution of the co-applicant, and confirmed in the support letter, the co-applicant can include a reasonable fraction of their salary based on their time commitment to the project stated in the application budget. The full salary of a co-applicant cannot be included in the budget.
- **Tuition fee** for Ph.D. students.
- **Travel expenses in relation to the project**, e.g. collaboration meetings, conference and workshop participation and presentation of research results derived from the project, or other travel expenses that are directly related to the project, e.g. for experiments carried out in other labs for a limited period of time.

- **Open access publication** of results originating from the project, as well as open access data sharing and data management.
- Reasonable **equipment** required for the project.
- **Consumables and operating expenses**: Direct expenses for developing, implementing and operating the project, including materials, access to infrastructure, lab consumables, chemicals, reagents, research animals, analysis services, data collection and storage, etc.
- **Bench fee*** (not applicable to Danish universities).
- **Project supplement for research grants**** (Danish universities only).
- **Administrative expenses***** (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 (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:**

- Salary for the main applicant
- Commercial activities
- Overhead/indirect costs (such as rent, electricity, water and maintenance)
- In general, the Foundation does not fund projects in which weight loss in trials using anti-obesity medication is a primary goal. Grants and projects involving use of products where Novo Group companies have a commercial interest (i.e. anti-obesity medications) must be in accordance with the Foundation's Policy on Engaged Ownership of Novo Group companies, as well as the Foundation's internal policies
- 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

## 1.4 Language

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

## 1.5 Application process and assessment criteria

The Novo Nordisk Foundation's Committee for Infectious Diseases will primarily assess the applications based on the following criteria:

- Fit within the outlined thematic research areas.
- Originality, feasibility, translatability, and potential for future impact, preferentially in the form of needed globally implementable tools.
- Scientific quality, state of the art, and methodologies in the project.

Background and expertise of main applicant (and if included co-applicant) will be reviewed relatively to career stage. If a co-applicant is included in the project, complementarity, suitability, and diversity of the collaboration will be taken into consideration.

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.**

# 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.

## 3.2 Co-applicant(s)

For this call, up to one co-applicant is permitted 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 the co-applicant, and the budget should clearly indicate the co-applicant's 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.

**BRIEF PROJECT DESCRIPTION** (maximum 2,000 characters, including spaces)
In this field, please provide a brief stand-alone high-level summary of the project describing the scientific goals, significance, originality, and potential application and impact of the research project.

**PROJECT DESCRIPTION** (maximum 20,000 characters including spaces)
The project description should be sufficient in experimental details for a thorough scientific review and include the following:

- Aims/Goals/Objectives of the research project.
- Brief background/introduction.
- Research plan including experimental approaches, methods, tools, and technologies.
- Expected outcome(s), milestones, and deliverables including timeline. Please include a Gantt chart as one of the uploaded figures.
- Description of what is catalysed by this project, the need and potential impact of this research, and next steps for the use and/or translation of the knowledge gained.
- Contingency plan(s) and risk mitigation strategies.
- Contribution and roles of main applicant and co-applicant (if included) including interdependencies and organizational outline.

It is encouraged to include preliminary data to support thorough scientific and feasibility evaluation of the proposed project.

**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).

**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).

## 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. The budget must be submitted in and will be awarded in DKK. Any additional budget information attached under **Appendices** (or any other tabs) will not be considered.

## 3.6 Appendices

1) **Hosting letter:** A hosting letter from the administrating institution confirming that, if granted:
    - The administrating institution will host the project and be the Grant Recipient.
    - The applicant is an established investigator with their own line of research and will be employed for the duration of the project at the administrating institution.
    - If the main applicant is Head of Department or otherwise part of the management, the hosting letter must be signed by someone from the management level above the main applicant.
2) **Support letter:** If there is a co-applicant included in the application, a support letter from the co-applicant's institution must also be submitted, confirming that, if granted:
    - The co-applicant is employed at the institution, and the institution will support the co-applicant's participation in the project and ensure that the required infrastructure is made available.
    - If funding is requested to cover a reasonable part of the co-applicant's salary, the support letter should specify how this aligns with the other obligations of the co-applicant and the policies of the co-applicant's institution.

**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.