novo nordisk foundation

Benefitting people and society

Guidelines for applicants

POSTDOCTORAL FELLOWSHIPS 2026

PLANT SCIENCE, AGRICULTURE AND FOOD BIOTECHNOLOGY

Facts about the call

Total amount available for granting:
DKK 27 million

Amount available per grant:
Up to **DKK 3.3 million**

Call opens:
4 June 2026 (CEST)

Call closes:
20 August 2026 14:00

Applicant notification:
December 2026

Earliest start date:
1 January 2027

Latest start date:
1 November 2027

Review committee:
Committee on Plant Science, Agriculture and Food Biotechnology

Contact:
Fábio Faria-Oliveira
Senior Scientific Manager (Food)
ffo@novo.dk

Thies Marten Heick
Scientific Manager (Plant & Agriculture)
tmh@novo.dk

Grant Management – PAF support
paf-support@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 and granting process at the NORMA Help Centre. Detailed information about the different parts of the application is available in NORMA.

1 POSTDOCTORAL FELLOWSHIPS FOR RESEARCH WITHIN PLANT SCIENCE, AGRICULTURE[1] AND FOOD BIOTECHNOLOGY

1.1 Purpose

Applications are invited for individual fellowships to support outstanding postdoctoral scientists conducting research within plant science, agriculture, and food biotechnology. The intention of the fellowship is to enable excellent young scientists to develop their own independent research area. The proposed research should address major challenges within plant, agricultural, and food science associated with developing sustainable agriculture and food production. The research should be fundamental in character with a clear and strategic outlook to improve sustainability and potential solutions. The proposed research should significantly extend existing knowledge beyond state-of-the-art and may have a high-risk profile. The research should be based on life science research disciplines.
Fellowships must be based at a university or other non-profit research institution in Denmark, Greenland, the Faroe Islands, Finland, Iceland, Norway, or Sweden.

1.2 Areas of support

Non-exhaustive list of areas that would fall within scope:
• Research focused on plants and microorganisms for food, fibre, materials or climate change mitigation that enhance productivity, resilience, and resource-use efficiency across the value chain from primary agricultural production to end-product.
• Development of agricultural-, food-, and forestry systems with higher productivity using less land, and with greater circularity, biodiversity, ecosystem functionality and with minimum impact on environment and climate.
• Research on the characterization and application of microorganisms or microbial communities for circular economy purposes including inputs in agriculture, food and ecosystem services.
• Research into the understanding of food components and ingredients derived from plants, microbes, insects, and cellular agriculture, with a focus on functionality, safety, and technological aspects of food science and biotechnology.

[1] Agriculture is here defined as terrestrial farming and cultivation of plants, including forestry.

• Research focused on merging food raw materials and ingredients from the above-mentioned categories to understand the interplay between various components in the food matrix, e.g. to enhance processability, stability, and organoleptic quality.
• Interdisciplinary approaches including nutrition and health aspects may only be included to a limited extent.
• Research focused on the development and application of methods and technologies, including data-driven approaches such as models and algorithms, to enable and support sustainable agriculture and food production. A significant proportion of the proposed research should explore the use of the new method or technology for its intended application.

The program will not support:

- Research primarily focusing on livestock, livestock commodities, and feed
- Research focusing on aquaculture, or its derived commodities
- Research with their main research component on nutritional uptake and clinical studies

If you are uncertain whether a project aligns with the scope, you are encouraged to send a brief description (2-3 lines) of the proposed project to the scientific managers of this call.

Projects with a focus on pharmaceuticals and therapeutics should submit their application to the Novo Nordisk Foundation Committee on Bioscience and Basic Biomedicine while proposals focusing on industrial biotechnology and environmental biotechnology should be submitted to the Novo Nordisk Foundation Committee Industrial Biotechnology and Environmental Biotechnology.

1.3 Eligibility

Fellowship recipients must have obtained a PhD or equivalent degree before the postdoctoral fellowship can be activated.
• The applicant should have obtained the PhD or equivalent degree within 5 years[2] of the application deadline date.
• If an applicant is still a PhD student, their thesis defence date must be before April 1, 2027. The PhD supervisor must confirm the expected defence date (in a letter from the PhD supervisor). The PhD degree must have been obtained before the Postdoc Fellowship can be activated.
At least one year of a fellowship must be used at the Nordic host institution. For applicants currently based at a Nordic host institution and who have not conducted research in another country, a research period with a minimum of 6 and a maximum of 24 months in total at a laboratory in another country will be considered as a positive element for the postdoctoral training but is not a requirement.
To utilise the fellowship, a recipient must be approved as a postdoctoral employee at the Nordic host institution. The applicant must consult with the planned supervisor at the host

[2] Not including parental leave breaks

institution before submission of the application (a hosting letter from the administrating institution must be uploaded, Section 3.5). If a research stay abroad is also proposed, the planned supervisor at that location must also be contacted prior to applying.
For applicants hosted at Danish universities, any planned or expected transition to a position in VIP Group A (cf. the Project Supplement Agreement) during the project period must be disclosed in the hosting letter. Such applicants are only eligible if they will remain employed as postdoctoral researchers for at least 50% of the project period before the transition takes effect.
The applicant has the main responsibility for developing the project, writing the application, and carrying out the research.

Important restrictions regarding NNF grants and proposals:

- At any given time, the applicant may only have *one* Novo Nordisk Foundation Postdoctoral Fellowship[3] 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 Novo Nordisk Foundation Postdoctoral Fellowship.
- The applicant may submit applications for other grant types, e.g., Research Leader Programmes or Pioneer Innovator Grants, while their Postdoctoral Fellowship application is under evaluation if these applications cover different research activities.
- It is not possible to hold more than one active Postdoctoral Fellowship grant. Applicants with an active Postdoctoral Fellowship grant can only apply for a new Postdoctoral Fellowship grant in the final year of the project, however, the grant periods cannot overlap.
- Please refer to our general terms and conditions for further information when applying for/receiving a grant from NNF.

1.4 Funding

The grant period should be between 1-3 years. The total grant amount is up to DKK 3.3 million for a 3-year grant. The grant amount should be distributed approximately equally each year, and for projects shorter than three years, the total grant amount should be proportionally reduced.
The host institution in the Nordic country will administer the fellowship throughout the fellowship period, including possible periods when the postdoctoral research is performed at another research institution.

[3] Postdoctoral Fellowship calls at the Novo Nordisk Foundation include: Postdoctoral Fellowship within Plant Science, Agriculture and Food Biotechnology; Postdoctoral Fellowship within Industrial Biotechnology and Environmental Biotechnology; Postdoctoral Fellowship for research abroad – Bioscience and Basic Biomedicine; Visiting Scholar or Postdoctoral fellowships at MIT, Stanford Bio-X, University of Oxford *or* Weizmann, and New Exploratory Research and Discovery (NERD) progr amme.

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

Salary: The fellowship recipient's own salary (amount to be based on the postdoctoral fellow salary scale at the host institution). For Danish university hosts, the budget must state, as precisely as possible, the expected duration of the applicant's postdoctoral appointment. Please use several budget lines for Main Applicant's salary to separate the time periods spent at Danish University (eligible for project supplement) from potential time periods spent abroad (not eligible for project supplement).This must be consistent with the hosting letter, including any planned or expected transition to a position in VIP Group A during the project period. Any inconsistency between the budget and the hosting letter regarding salary period or Project Supplement entitlement will lead to administrative rejection.

Please, consult with the Nordic host institution regarding current agreements and regulations.

- **Salary** costs for technical/scientific assistance.
- **Direct project costs and operating expenses.**
- **Scientific equipment** (up to a cost of DKK 100.000 for an individual instrument).
- **Travel expenses** related to project activities.
- **Relocation expenses** related to relocation from outside the country of the Nordic host institution.
- **Cost Related to working in Collaborating Laboratory:** if the fellowship includes at least a 6-month research stay at a collaborating laboratory outside the country of the host institution, an amount of up to DKK 110,000 for travel and housing costs abroad can be included in the budget, bringing the maximum amount of the grant to DKK 3.41 million for a 3-year project.
- **International conference participation** to present the research results (maximum amount of DKK 50,000 per budget year).
- **Publication costs** to publish the results of the research.
- **Project Supplement** (only available for Danish Universities. DKK 257,000 per FTE for time spent at Danish Universities as postdoctoral researcher. More information is below).
- **Bench fee** (not applicable Danish Universities. More information is below)
- **Administrative expenses** (not applicable Danish Universities. More information is below).

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
- In general, grants and projects involving use of products where Novo Group companies have a commercial interest (e.g. anti-obesity medications) must be in accordance with the Foundation's Guidelines for Philanthropic Collaboration with NNF-Controlled Companies, as well as internal conflict of interest policies.
- 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.

1.6 Application process

Application system opens	**4 June 2026 14:00 CEST**
Application deadline	**20 August 2026 14:00 CEST**
Evaluation of applications	**September – November 2026**
Applicant notification	**December 2026**
Earliest possible start date	**1 January 2027**
Latest possible start date	**1 November 2027**

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

The Novo Nordisk Foundation's Committee on Plant Science, Agriculture and Food Biotechnology will primarily assess the applications based on the following criteria:

- Novelty and originality of the research idea
- Potential impact on the research areas mentioned in Section 1.2
- Impact on the applicants´ future career prospects
- Feasibility of the proposed research
- Achievements of the applicant
- Mobility and international experience

Postdoctoral Fellowships are individual grants awarded to excellent young scientists with original and ambitious projects to enable them to develop their independent research area. Hence, the potential of the applicant constitutes an important assessment criterion, and as such, both `Project´ and `Candidate´ will be considered in the assessment.

As a general rule, the Novo Nordisk Foundation processes all applications and grants in accordance with the rules followed by public research councils and foundations. This applies, in particular, to conditions concerning confidentiality, reviewer eligibility, impartiality and conflicts of interest. Applications from ineligible applicants will not be reviewed.

Career progression (e.g. assistant professor) within the Postdoctoral Fellowship programme is possible to a certain extent. However, applicants are advised to review their career to date and ensure that the entire proposed project and career development plan are coherent and align with the assessment criteria outlined above and the purpose of the call. Requests for career progression within granted fellowship must be reasonable in terms of timing and submitted via Norma. Each request will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis.

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.

CV
Please provide your brief CV with information on education, employment history, recent research funding, current supervision/training/teaching activities, summary of publication and bibliometric information (total number of peer-reviewed publications, first/corresponding/senior authorships, citation information, h-index), and other relevant information if space allows (max. 4,000 characters, including spaces).

PUBLICATION LIST
Please provide the complete reference information for your most important publications (up to 10). Include all authors (or number of authors, if necessary) for each publication and use bold or underline for your name. Applicants should include a link to an updated profile with a full publication list for the applicant on either Google Scholar, Web of Science, Scopus or ORCID. (max. 5,000 characters, including spaces).

SUMMARY OF OWN RESEARCH
Please summarize your own research that is of relevance to this application. (max. 2,000 characters)

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION
This field can be utilized if there is additional information that is important for the committee's review of your application. (max. 2,000 characters, including spaces).

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 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, the scientific question being addressed and activities.
(Maximum 2,000 characters, including spaces, line breaks and special characters).

PROJECT DESCRIPTION
Please describe your proposed research project in detail. Elements to be included are (maximum 20,000 characters, including spaces, line breaks and special characters).

- Major challenge being addressed and strategic outlook. How does the proposed research help to provide sustainable and scalable solutions to challenges within Plant science, Agriculture and Food Biotechnology?
- Specific aims, testable hypotheses, and success criteria.
- Critical knowledge gaps and identification of important research questions.
- Scientific background covering state-of-the art most relevant to the project.

- Experimental plan including methods and technologies to be utilized and/or developed.
- Alternative approaches, risk assessment and contingency plans.
- Discussion of experimental outcomes and potential impact.
- Description of scientific skills (e.g., new techniques and data handling) and transferable skills (e.g., project management and entrepreneurship) that the applicant will gain from the planned postdoctoral training.
- Motivation for developing an independent research area and seeking a research career

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).

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.

3.5 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.

Supporting documents:

HOSTING LETTER: Host letter from the planned postdoctoral supervisor at the administrating institution in Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway or Sweden, acknowledging that the postdoctoral fellow can conduct the proposed project in the supervisor's lab and institution. For Danish universities, please specify in the hosting letter the expected duration of the applicant's postdoctoral appointment, including any planned or expected transition to a position in VIP Group A during the project period. Any

inconsistency between the budget and the hosting letter regarding salary period or Project Supplement entitlement will lead to administrative rejection.

- **HOSTING LETTER:** If the project will involve a research stay at a laboratory in another country, a host letter from the collaborating laboratory confirming that the postdoctoral fellow can work on the project at that institution must be provided.
- **OTHER UPLOAD** (only for current PhD students): If the applicant is a PhD student: A letter from the PhD supervisor confirming the timeline for thesis completion before April 1, 2027.