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Information about the call

Grant capital:
DKK 86 million

Award amount
Up to DKK 3 million per grant

Application form opens:
15 June 2023

Application deadline:
5 September 2023

Applicant notification:
December 2023

Earliest start date:
1 January 2024

Latest start date:
31 December 2024

Review committee:
[Committee on Bioscience and Basic Biomedicine](#)

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2023.01

1 PROJECT GRANTS IN BIOSCIENCE AND BASIC BIOMEDICINE 2023

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

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

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

Furthermore, please read 'General Terms and Conditions' for grants from NNF that all Grant Recipients must comply with:

<http://www.novonordiskfonden.dk/en/content/conditions-grants>

1.1 PURPOSE

The objective of this call 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.

1.2 AREAS OF SUPPORT

Bioscience and basic biomedicine including (but not limited to): Molecular biology, cell biology, bioinformatics, modelling of biological systems, enzymology, genetics, microbiology, animal models, pharmacology, experimental physiology, biophysics, biochemistry, biology, and biostatistics etc. The supported research will typically be carried out in animals, model systems, cellular or subcellular systems, or in silico.

RNA biology

In this application round there will be a special emphasis on research projects aimed at understanding fundamental RNA biology with a cell biology focus. DKK 10 million is earmarked for projects up to DKK 3 million.

The Novo Nordisk Foundation also offers near identical calls for project grants within the areas listed below.

- [Endocrinology and metabolism](#)
- [Clinical and translational medicine](#)
- [Physical and technical sciences](#)
- [Industrial and environmental biotechnology](#)
- [Plant science, agriculture, and food biotechnology](#)

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 evaluated¹. You may submit only one application for one 'Project Grant' in either of these areas in 2023.

1.3 ELIGIBILITY

Who can apply:

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. As this grant cannot cover salary of the grantee, the applicant must be guaranteed his or her own salary for the entire applied project period².

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

Where must the research primarily take place:

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

What types of projects can be supported:

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

Project grants in bioscience and basic biomedicine are individual grants at the disposal of the applicant. If the applied project involves collaboration, the collaborators 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. The merits of collaborators will not be assessed under the evaluation and it is implicit that collaborators support the application. Co-applicants are not allowed within this call³.

IMPORTANT RULES!

¹ If in doubt to what call your project should be submitted, you are welcome to send us a brief description (no more than 10 lines) starting with the purpose of your project and highlighting the key research areas/technologies. Email: pfe@novo.dk

² In the hosting letter from the administering institution employment and/or funding secured for the applicant's salary must be confirmed.

³ A Co-applicant is a person or a legal entity for whom funding is requested in addition to the Applicant in the Grant Application that undertakes the same rights and obligations as the Applicant or Grant Recipient as applicable. A Co-applicant must accede to the Grant Agreement.

- An applicant can only submit one proposal to one of the 2023 NNF 'Project Grants' calls⁴ (specified below). If an applicant submits more than one application to these calls, only the first application submitted will be evaluated, while the subsequent applications will receive administrative rejections.
- 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 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 86 million is available for grants between DKK 300.000 and 3.000.0000 for projects lasting up to 3 years.

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

- Salary for employees
- Tuition fee
- Operating expenses
- Equipment
- Conference participation
- Travel
- Publication costs
- Bench fee
- Direct administrative expenses (up to 5 % of the total funding applied for)

NNF will not award funding for:

- commercial activities
- overhead



The grant may not be used to cover 'overhead' (i.e. rent, electricity, water, maintenance etc.)

1.5 LANGUAGE

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

⁴ Mutually exclusive calls: 'Project Grants' in Bioscience and Basic Biomedicine', 'Project Grants in Clinical and Translational Medicine', 'Project Grants in Endocrinology and Metabolism', Project Grants in Natural and Technical Sciences', 'Project Grants in Industrial Biotechnology and Environmental Biotechnology' and 'Project Grants in 'Plant science, Agriculture and Food biotechnology'.

1.6 APPLICATION PROCESS

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

<https://norma.novonordiskfonden.dk>

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



When all applications have been assessed, applicants will be notified about whether or not they have been awarded a grant. The notification e-mail will be sent from norma-noreply@novo.dk to the e-mail address entered on initial registration.



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

1.7 ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

NNF's Foundation's [Committee on Bioscience and Basic Biomedicine](#) will primarily assess the applications based on the following criteria:

Primary criteria - quality, novelty, state-of-the-art and feasibility of the projects, and secondary criteria - the commitment and merits (relative to age and career stage) of the applicant.

Successful applications describe focused projects, feasible within the budget, timeframe and the manpower requested.

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 Grant Recipient has delivered results on the active grant(s) before submission of a new application to NNF. If you apply, while having an active grant from NNF, 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).

Specifically, if you hold an Emerging, Ascending or Distinguished Investigator grant within bioscience and basic biomedicine, we recommended that you at 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.

During a trial period in 2023-2025, the grant selection procedure will encompass two parallel schemes: 1) Traditional committee-based evaluation. 2) Partial randomisation.

For both selection procedures, 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 through scheme 2) with partial randomisation.

Those fundable applications that are unanimously evaluated by the committees as highest rated 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.

2 THE APPLICATION AND GRANT MANAGEMENT SYSTEM – NORMA

Sections 2 and 3 provide guidance on completing and submitting an application through NNF’s online application and grant management system NORMA. Section 2 contains general technical information, while section 3 contains information specific to the individual call. All the fields of the application form must be completed in accordance with these guidelines and the instructions in NORMA.

2.1 USER REGISTRATION

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

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

If you do not have a user profile in NORMA, you can register by clicking REGISTER from the login-page. Here you can also retrieve forgotten passwords by clicking the FORGOT PASSWORD-link. The main applicant should only have one user profile. Please use your work e-mail address for registration. After registration, you will receive an e-mail with your username and a

temporary password, which you can then use to log in to NORMA. After logging in for the first time you will be asked to provide a password of your own choosing.

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

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



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

2.2 CREATING AN APPLICATION

Initiate an application by finding the call you wish to apply for in the OPEN CALLS-section on the Applicant Portal in NORMA. Use the search filters at the top of the section to filter by e.g., overall funding area, and initiate an application by clicking APPLY NOW next to the relevant call.

Applications can be edited up until the deadline. A draft application can be saved by clicking SAVE DRAFT and may be cancelled at any time up until the deadline by clicking CANCEL APPLICATION. An application is not submitted to NNF until an applicant has clicked SUBMIT and has received confirmation that the application has been successfully submitted.

You can review the application at any time by reopening from within NORMA. Opening the application will also allow you to download the application in its entirety as a PDF. Make sure the PDF is readable and formatted appropriately before submitting your application.

2.3 TEXT AND ILLUSTRATIONS

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



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

TEXT FIELDS

Text from Microsoft Word or comparable word processors can be copied and pasted into most text fields of the application. It is, however, important to check that formatting, special characters, and symbols have not been converted or lost in the text fields after copying and pasting. If the formatting looks wrong in NORMA or in the PDF, try changing all text to *Normal* using the FORMAT dropdown. It is the responsibility of the applicant to ensure that the pdf looks correct before submitting.

The available options for formatting text are at the top of the text fields. Some shorter text fields do not have the option to use rich text formatting.



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

ILLUSTRATIONS

Illustrations such as figures, charts, tables, images, etc. related to the project description can be uploaded under PROPOSAL. A Maximum of four illustrations are allowed. The illustrations will be placed on a separate page in the application PDF but can be referenced throughout the project proposal as needed. For readability, please name the files numerically by the order in which they are referenced.

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

2.4 SUBMITTING THE APPLICATION

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



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

All applicants must read and accept NNF's [Standards for Good Research Practice](#) before submitting the application. Further, the applicant must declare that the information provided in the application is true and accurate.

An application cannot be submitted unless all the required fields have been completed. Applications can be cancelled at any time before submission. If you need to withdraw an application after the deadline, please get in touch with NNF via e-mail, using the contact information on page 3.



A list of any incorrect or incomplete entries will be generated at the top of the screen when you click SUBMIT. Clicking one of these error messages will take you to the relevant field. Amending incorrect or incomplete entries can be time-consuming, so we recommend submitting applications well before the deadline.

3 APPLICATION CONTENT

This section provides guidelines on the content required in the sections of the online application form for this call.

3.1 APPLICANT

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

- Personal information
- Educational information
- Current institution
- Experience (CV, Publications, Summary of own research)
- Previous and Current Grants from NNF

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 NNF you must list them in the table ONLY if they are still under review and thus a granting decision has not yet been made.

If 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 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 you will be employed during the grant period and the institution which will be responsible for budgeting, accounting, and staff supported by the grant.



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

3.3 PROPOSAL

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

PROJECT TITLE

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

BRIEF PROJECT DESCRIPTION

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

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

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

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 of 50 mb each can be uploaded here. See section 2.3 for technical instructions).

LITERATURE REFERENCES

Please provide the reference information for the literature cited in the project description (maximum 4000 characters, including spaces). 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

In English (maximum 1000 characters, including spaces). 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 and no confidential information should therefore be included in this section.



Please note that the application should address all the assessment criteria listed in subsection 1.7.

3.4 BUDGET

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

GRANT PERIOD

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

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

The total amount applied for per project should be within the frame of DKK 300,000 – 1,000,000 per budget year⁵ and must be within the total budget frame of DKK 300,000 – 3,000,000.

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

⁵ A one-year project can receive a maximum of DKK 1,000,000 in funding, a two-year project a maximum of DKK 2,000,000, and a three-year project a maximum of DKK 3,000,000 in funding, however small deviations from DKK 1,000,000 per budget year is acceptable when applying.

- **Salary for employees;** postdoctoral researchers, PhD students, technicians, and researchers or research-year students working on the project. Salary expenses cannot cover project employees of similar or higher academic employment level than the applicant.
- **Tuition fee;** for PhD students (maximum DKK 80,000 per budget year) - must be specified separately in the budget.
- **Operating expenses;** consumables, materials, animals, human test subjects, services, etc., directly related to the project.
- **Equipment;** smaller equipment required for the project (maximum DKK 200,000 per budget year).
- **Conference participation;** travel and registration expenses in relation to presenting the project at conferences and workshops (maximum DKK 25,000 per budget year).
- **Travel;** travel expenses related directly to the project, i.e. experiments carried out in other labs for a limited time.
- **Publication costs;** of results emanating from the research project (maximum DKK 25,000 per budget year).
- **Bench fee:** To include a bench fee in the budget, the fee must be part of the general expenses policy of the institute/institution. Further, if bench fee is included in the budget applied for, it must be elaborated in the budget what exactly it covers, and it may only be used for lab consumables and access to lab space and facilities that cannot be included within 'operating expenses' or another budget category.
- **Direct administrative expenses;** up to 5 % of the total funding applied for.

Bench fee can be included in the budget for support of individual researchers to cover expenses needed to conduct the proposed research. To include a bench fee in the budget, the fee must be a part of the general expense policy of the administrating institution, and it must apply for all employees independently of funding source.

Bench fee is calculated per academic employee actively working on the project and may only be used for expenses that are related to the research project and which cannot be included within another individual budget category. Bench fee may account for maximum DKK 8.000 per month per FTE working on the project, and the budget must specify the expenses covered by the bench fee, which may include:

- Common or shared laboratory expenses and consumables
- Laboratory utilities (electricity, gas, water)
- Maintenance of essential equipment
- Service contracts
- Technical and IT support

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

Documentation that the administrating institution has a general bench fee policy should be included in a Hosting Letter from the administrating institution enclosed as link or appendix. An unspecified bench fee without documentation will not be accepted.

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

This grant cannot cover:

- overhead
- own salary for principal investigator/applicant

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

- If the applicant has received funding for the project or parts of the project, this must be included in the budget.
- If an identical or overlapping project proposal has been submitted to other funding institutions than the Novo Nordisk Foundation, it should be noted in the 'supplementary information' under the budget tab, and the overlapping budget posts should be specified.
- If the applicant, post application submission, receives funding for the project or parts of the applied project from others, the Novo Nordisk Foundation must be contacted as soon as possible.

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

Funding (for the project applied for), received from the applicant's own organisation and/or from other sources should be entered under ADDITIONAL CONTRIBUTIONS FOR THE PROJECT. Organisational co-funding is not an evaluation criterion and should only be stated when relevant. The amount entered should be the total sum received for the entire grant period, and it must be clearly described what the additional contributions cover. The NNF does not allow double funding and there can be no budgetary overlaps with already funded activities.

Funding applied for but not yet received should NOT be entered under ADDITIONAL CONTRIBUTIONS FOR THE PROJECT. If overlapping proposals and specific budget posts applied for in this application are also applied for elsewhere it should be stated under SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION. If the applicant, after submitting the application, receives funding for the project or parts of the applied project from others, the NNF must be contacted as soon as possible.



Applicants may only apply for the types of expenses listed in subsection 1.4.

3.5 APPENDICES

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

- A confirmation from the host institution that they accept that the project will take place at the given institution and that the institution will provide the required infrastructure, such as laboratory and office space, and administration of the grant
- A confirmation that the host institution has agreed to the submitted budget and that the host institution will manage the potential grant according to this budget.
- The terms of employment at the host institution should be described.
- If bench fee is applied for, include documentation that the host institution has a general bench fee policy (enclosed as link or appendix).

Please do not include other appendices.

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

June 2023

The Novo Nordisk Foundation

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

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