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Guidelines for applicants

START PACKAGE GRANTS Q3 2026

Only applications submitted by the person with appointment authority at the recruiting institution will be considered for funding.

Facts about the call

Total amount available for granting:
DKK 120 million

Amount available per grant:
Up to DKK 5 million at the assistant professor level
Up to DKK 8 million at the associate professor level
Up to DKK 10 million at the full professor level
Up to DKK 10 million as clinical- or clinical chair professor

Call opens:
8 April 2026
14:00 CET

Call closes:
25 June 2026
14:00 CET

Applicant notification:
Late August 2026

Earliest start date:
1 September 2026

Latest start date:
1 September 2027

Review committee:
Internal NNF committee: Committee on Start Package Grants

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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 Start Package Grants

1.1 Purpose

The primary purpose of the Start Package Grants is to make Danish universities and other research institutions more competitive when recruiting excellent researchers. The aim is also to strengthen researcher mobility across borders, among Danish universities and/or from industry to university.

The grant is intended to provide leverage for the hiring university/research institution during recruitment and contract negotiations and to accompany the offer of a **research** position of one of the following types:

- a tenure track position at the assistant professor level
- a time-unlimited position at the associate- or full professor level
- a clinical- or clinical chair professorship position with mandatory research responsibilities for a minimum of five years.

The research of the candidate should be ambitious and bring substantial value and/or novelty to a research field that has strategic relevance to the recruiting institution and the Foundation. A Start Package Grant will provide the host institution with funding that must be used in connection with the candidate's establishment of an independent research group at the Danish host institution.

1.2 Areas of support

The grant supports recruitment of researchers within medical sciences, life sciences, sustainability, or natural and technical sciences in fields that are in alignment with the Foundation's 2030 Strategy. This includes:

- Preventing and managing cardiometabolic diseases
- Decreasing the burden and threat of infectious diseases
- Advancing and applying regenerative medicine
- Reducing inequity in health
- Sustainable and high yield agriculture
- Sustainable food for healthy diets
- High-impact climate change mitigation technologies
- Supporting society in the green transition

- Fundamental research with potential application within health or sustainability, for instance bioscience, metabolism, the microbiome, systems biology, natural and technical sciences, data and computer science, artificial intelligence, quantum technologies, mathematical modelling, materials science, robotics, etc.
- Interdisciplinary research with potential application within health or sustainability
- Technology development with potential application within health or sustainability

Out of scope: In general, the NNF does not support projects where the primary focus is livestock or sustainable architecture.

1.3 Eligibility

Only applications submitted by the person with the appointment authority at the recruiting institution will be considered for funding. All other applications will receive an administrative rejection by the Foundation. *NB: The authority to make appointments varies among Danish research institutions; therefore, these guidelines cannot provide more detailed specifications on who should submit the application.*

To be eligible for a Start Package Grant, the following requirements must be met:

Recruiting institution

- The recruiting institution must be a university, hospital, or other non-profit research organisation in Denmark.
- The recruiting institution may only submit one Start Package Grant application per vacant faculty position and designated candidate. There is no limit to how many applications the institution may submit in total, provided there is no overlap in the positions applied for.
- Prior to the application deadline, the recruiting institution must have identified their top candidate for the vacant position and performed an evaluation by a **scientifically competent and objective** appointment committee.
    - The committee must have at least two external members, of which at least one must be international.
- If the candidate is awarded a Start Package Grant, the recruiting institution must within two months of notification provide confirmation that the appointment has been co-signed by all involved parties, otherwise the grant is null and void.

Position

- The position offered to the candidate must be a **research position**, with eligibility criteria depending on the level of the position:
    - At the **assistant professor level**, the position must be part of the institution's tenure track programme, i.e., assistant professors in time-limited positions are not eligible for this programme. The position must have been announced in a public call.
    - At the **associate or full professor level**, the position must be a time-unlimited research position. The position may have been announced in a public call or the candidate may have been 'called'. A professor *with special responsibilities* ("WSR", in Danish: "med særlige opgaver, MSO") is not eligible for a full

professor-level Start Package grant but is eligible for an associate professor-level Start Package grant.
    - For **clinical- or clinical chair professor** positions, research responsibilities must be a mandatory part of the position, and the duration must be a minimum of five years. The position may have been announced in a public call or the candidate may have been 'called'.
- The scope of the position must align with the Foundation's strategy and areas of support.

Candidate

- The candidate **must show mobility** and relocate to a new research institution as part of the recruitment.
    - In the past 36 months, the candidate must not have conducted research activities at the recruiting institution for more than 12 months. Periods of leave of absence are excluded from the calculation of the 36 and 12 months.
    - For dual appointments, such as clinical professorships with both university and hospital affiliations, the mobility requirements pertain to both affiliations.
- Internal recruitment is not supported; this also applies if the candidate relocates across faculties within the same institution.
- The candidate can be recruited either from abroad or within Denmark. However, if the recruitment occurs within Denmark, the candidate must be offered a position with **career progression** (i.e., from postdoc to tenure track assistant professor, assistant to associate professor, or associate to full professor/clinical professor).
- Candidate recruitment can both be from one academic institution to another, or from industry to an academic institution. If the candidate is recruited from industry and they have spent at least 24 months out of the last 36 months outside academia, the career progression requirement does not apply.
- The candidate's research plan and scientific profile must align with the strategy of the recruiting institution and with the Foundation's strategy.
- The candidate must have been **assessed qualified** for the position by an objective appointment committee (see above); this also applies to 'called' candidates.
- The position must have been offered to the candidate, and they must not have started in the position before the deadline for the preceding call for the Start Package Grant (**in this case 8 April 2026**).
- If awarded a Start Package Grant, the candidate must within one year establish their research group at the recruiting institution with a full-time commitment.
- The candidate can have any nationality.

General rules relevant for this programme (in this programme the rules pertain to the recruited candidate)

- Candidates can only receive a Start Package Grant once.
- The recruiting institution can only apply for a Start Package Grant for a specific candidate once.
- It is not possible to hold more than one active grant from the Foundation of the following grant types: 'Start Package Grant', 'Laureate Research Grant' and 'RECRUIT Grant'.
- From the Start Package call opens and until the recruiting institution has been notified of the decision, the candidate is not allowed to apply for another NNF grant as main applicant of the following grant types: 'Laureate Research Grant' and 'RECRUIT Grant'.

1.4 Funding

A total of up to DKK 120 million is available for grants. For each grant, the following amount can be awarded over a 4-year grant period:

- Up to DKK 5 million for a tenure-track position at the assistant professor level
- Up to DKK 8 million for a position at the associate professor level
- Up to DKK 10 million for a position at the full professor level
- Up to DKK 10 million for a position as clinical- or clinical chair professor

The maximum amount for each career level will only be awarded in exceptional cases, i.e., if the candidate is considered of highest excellence in his/her field of research and has a track record at a high international level at the career stage applied for.

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

- Salary for employees such as technicians, postdoctoral researchers and Ph.D. students
  NB: The Start Package grant cannot cover the candidate's own salary
- Tuition fee: up to DKK 80,000 per PhD student per budget year (must be included on a separate budget line)
- Expenses related to relocation, lab establishment and refurbishment
- Operating expenses such as consumables and access to computing/experimental facilities
- Equipment and infrastructure
- Travel and conference participation
- Publication costs
- Project supplement (universities only)
- Bench fee (not applicable to universities)
- Administrative support (not applicable to 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.

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.

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.

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.
- The Start Package grant cannot be used to cover the candidate's own salary; this must be covered by the recruiting institution or an external grant for a limited period

1.5 Language

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

1.6 Application process

Start Package grants are awarded four times per year, with a quarterly submission deadline and grant notification typically within 4-5 weeks (8-9 weeks for the Q3 call). A new call opens as the preceding call closes.

Call #	Application deadline (tentative)	Grant notification (tentative)
Q4 2026	Early October	Mid-November
Q1 2027	Early February	Early March
Q2 2027	Early April	Early May
Q3 2027	Late June	Late August

The grant period can start up until 12 months after grant notification. The candidate is expected to arrive at the recruiting institution before or very shortly after the start of the grant period.

When all applications have been assessed, applicants will be informed 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 Foundation's internal Committee for Start Package Grants will assess the applications and evaluate the candidates according to their career level based primarily on the following criteria:

- Scientific track record and/or academic potential of the candidate
- Alignment with the Foundation's 2030 strategy
- How the candidate's research plan aligns with the recruiting institution. This could be by strengthening existing research areas or by introducing new research fields to the institution
- How the candidate plans to contribute to scientific, educational, and other activities at the recruiting institution
- The objectivity and quality of the recruiting institution's candidate assessment
    - *NB: The submitted evaluation must demonstrate that the candidate assessment was conducted in a transparent manner by a scientifically qualified and objective appointment committee; the members must not have a conflict of interest.*
    - *The Foundation will use the content of the submitted evaluation form as part of its assessment of the candidate. Therefore, it is expected that the evaluation form is completed fully and in detail.*

If the candidate has an active grant from the Foundation, this may be taken into consideration in the evaluation of the application. In such cases, it must be described how the research proposed is different from and/or coherent with the project(s) already funded and briefly describe the progress of the already funded project(s).

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

In the Start Package Grant programme, 'Applicant' refers to the person with the appointment authority, and 'Candidate' refers to the person being recruited. **Only applications submitted by the person with appointment authority at the recruiting institution will be considered for funding.** All other applications will receive an administrative rejection by the Foundation.

In the **Applicant** tab, please provide information according to following instructions:

- ***Personal Details***. Fill in information for the candidate in 'Most Recent Degree' and 'Date of Degree'. The remaining information in this section is pre-loaded from the applicant's profile and should not be edited.
- ***Current institution.*** Fill in information for the candidate. Please contact NORMA Support if you need to register the candidate's institution: norma-support@novo.dk.
- ***Experience.*** Fill in N/A in all the mandatory fields and instead use the **Appendices** tab to provide information on the candidate, cf. section 3.5.
- ***Previous and Current Grants from the Foundation.*** Information in this section is pre-loaded from the applicant's profile and should not be edited. If the candidate has submitted other applications to the Foundation in the same calendar year, and/or received any grants from the Foundation within the last 5 years, as main or co-applicant, this information should be included in the candidate's CV and/or relocation plan, cf. section 3.5.
- ***Supporting Documents.*** Do not upload any supporting documents but use the **Appendices** tab to provide the information requested in section 3.5.

3.2 Institution

Please provide information about the recruiting institution; this is where the candidate 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 recruitment: The title should state the career level that the candidate will be recruited to, and the name of the candidate, i.e., **[position] + [name]**.

BRIEF PROJECT DESCRIPTION
This does not apply for the Start Package Programme, please fill in N/A.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION
Please account for the candidate's profile, research plan, and alignment with the strategy of the recruiting institution. Describe how the candidate will add to scientific, educational, and faculty activities at the recruiting institution. The application should address the assessment criteria listed in section 1.7. Please provide the start date if the candidate has already started in the position at the recruiting institution. (maximum 5,000 characters, including spaces, line breaks and special characters).

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).
If not applicable, please fill in N/A.

LAY PROJECT DESCRIPTION
Please provide a summary of the recruitment 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.

The following uploads are required:

- **Short CV**: Maximum 2 pages. The candidate must disclose their citizenship. If the candidate has submitted other applications to the Foundation in the same calendar year, and/or received any grants from the Foundation within the last 5 years, as main or co-applicant, this information must be included in the CV.
- **Full publication list**: Please provide a full publication list and include a short bibliometric overview summarising total number of peer-reviewed publications, number of first authorships, number of corresponding authorships, number of citations, and h-index of the candidate (please indicate the source of the bibliometric data). Candidates are strongly encouraged to state their ORCID.
- **Evaluation of the candidate** by a scientifically competent and objective appointment committee, conducted in connection with the evaluation of the candidate for the relevant faculty position, and organised by the recruiting institution. It is the obligation of the recruiting institution to seek consent from involved parties to share this evaluation with the Foundation. Moreover, the recruiting institution should ensure that the evaluation form is fully completed, and that all topics in the form are addressed.
- **List of members of the assessment/appointment committee:** If not already included in the candidate evaluation report, a list of the appointment committee members disclosing their names, positions, and affiliation should be provided. The committee must include at least two external members, with at least one being international; the members shall have no conflict of interest.
- **Research plan**: The research plan provided must be identical to the one submitted by the candidate when applying for the position, and thereby identical with the research plan evaluated by the appointment committee; this also applies to ‘called‘ candidates.
    - If literature references are not part of the research plan, these may be added in the **Proposal** tab under Literature references.

- **Plan/timeline for the relocation:** This must be prepared by the candidate and potentially address collaborators that the candidate has identified in the Danish research communities. Maximum 1 page.
    - If the candidate has active funding, including grant(s) from the Foundation, or applies for other funding from the Foundation while the Start Package Grant application is under review, it should be briefly described how the research proposed in this application is different from and/or coherent with existing project(s).
- **Faculty job advertisement:** The public announcement of the position is mandatory unless the candidate is 'called'.
- **Other uploads:** If the candidate is hired into a position with joint appointment, such as a clinical professorship affiliated with both a university and a hospital, each employing entity must formally express their endorsement of the candidate.