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foundation

Benefitting people and society

Guidelines for applicants

FEMALE HEART – MECHANISTIC RESEARCH GRANTS



Facts about the call

Total amount available for granting:

DKK 75 million

Amount available per grant:

Up to DKK 15 million for a five-year project

Phase 1 Concept note:

Call opens:
13 January 2026

Call closes:
19 March 2026, 2:00pm
(Copenhagen Time)

Phase 2 Application:

Call opens:
25 May 2026

Call closes:
12 August 2026, 2:00pm
(Copenhagen Time)

Applicant notification:

Phase 1 Concept note:
Phase 2 Application:

May 2026
November 2026

Earliest start date:

1 January 2027

Latest start date:

1 January 2028

Review committee:

Internal NNF committee and international peer review

Contact:

Camilla Banke Birk
Grant Specialist
Email: cbk@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.



Female Heart - Mechanistic Research Grants

1.1 Purpose

The purpose of the *Female Heart – Mechanistic Research Grants* is to enhance understanding of the mechanistic drivers of sex-related differences in cardiovascular disease by fostering European collaborative research projects anchored in the Nordics.

1.2 Areas of support

Grants awarded within this programme can fund mechanistic or translational research that seeks to enhance mechanistic understanding of sex-related differences in cardiovascular disease. Suggested areas of research include but are not limited to:

- How does age and life-phase affect the development and progression of cardiovascular disease?
- What are the long-term effects of disease drivers and treatments on cardiovascular function, and do they differ between sexes?
- Why are women more likely to exhibit impaired endothelial function?
- Why does non-obstructive coronary artery disease in women more often present with symptoms of myocardial ischaemia?
- Do causative feedback loops exist between cardiovascular disease and the observed sex specific comorbidities?

PLEASE NOTE

Sex-related differences in cardiovascular disease must be the core focus of the proposed research project and directly relate to the research hypothesis.

1.3 Eligibility

The project must be clearly defined, scientifically well-founded, and within the relevant thematic scope, with an appropriate and justified budget.

The research project must involve international collaboration. **Projects that involve main applicants and co-applicant(s) anchored at research institutions only located in the same**

country will not be eligible. See details below for specific requirements for main applicants and co-applicants.

The main applicant:

- 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** (Denmark, Sweden, Norway, Finland, Iceland)
- The main applicant must be employed at the institution they are applying from and must be guaranteed their own salaries for the entire project period.
- The main applicant must be an established researcher within their own line of research.
- An applicant may submit only one application to the Novo Nordisk Foundation for the “Female Heart – Mechanistic Research Grants.” If an applicant submits more than one application for the “Female Heart – Clinical Research Grants,” only the first application submitted will be evaluated. Any subsequent applications will be administratively rejected.

The co-applicant(s):

- The co-applicant(s) must be anchored and have their primary employment and research group at a university, hospital, or other non-profit research institution in the **European Economic Area (EEA) or United Kingdom (UK) or Swiss non-profit institution.**
- At least one of the co-applicant(s) must 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.**
- The co-applicant(s) must significantly contribute to the scientific advancement of the project and receive a significant part of the grant budget (to be detailed in the application). Further, it must be clear from the application how the project collaboration is ensured, and the work is distributed.
- The co-applicant(s) must be employed at the institution they are applying from and must be guaranteed their own salaries for the entire project period.
- You may serve as a co-applicant on a maximum of two applications for the “Female Heart – Mechanistic Research Grants.” However, if an individual serves as a co-applicant on more than one application, their overall workload and level of commitment may be taken into consideration during the evaluation of the application(s).

PLEASE NOTE

A person can only be an applicant on two applications to the *Female Heart – Mechanistic Research Grants* (either as a main applicant on one application and a co-applicant on one application OR as a co-applicant on two applications).

Active grants:

Main applicants with other active NNF grants can apply for a *Female Heart – Mechanistic Research Grants*. If the main applicant has an active grant from NNF, this will be taken into consideration in the evaluation of the 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 applying while having an active grant from NNF, the application must clearly state the differences between the projects.

Other applications to NNF:

In general, a main applicant can only submit one application to NNF for a specific research project per calendar year. Further, if an applicant, within the same calendar year, submits one application (or more) for a different research project for other calls within the NNF, this must be clearly stated in the application. If you submit an application after the application deadline to another NNF call, please notify this call's responsible grant officer by email.

1.4 Funding

A total of up to DKK 75 million is available for grants of between DKK 10 million and DKK 15 million for projects lasting for a minimum period of three years and a maximum period of five years.

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

- Salary for technicians, bioanalysts, and other technical assistance, including laboratory administrators.
- Salary for postdoctoral researchers.
- Salary for Ph.D. students (including tuition fee up to DKK 80,000 per year, which must be specified in the budget).
- Salary for research-year students.
- Salary for employees or project consultants at all staffing levels, including project management; however, researchers in permanent positions cannot apply for funding covering their own salary.
- Travel expenses in relation to the project, e.g. conference and workshop participation and presentation of research results derived from the project, up to DK 50,000 per budget year.
- 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.
- Publication of results originating from the project, up to DKK 50,000 per budget year.
- Communication and outreach in the form of conferences, books, articles and other dissemination directly related to the project.
- Equipment required for the project, however, not exceeding 20% of the total budget.

- Direct expenses for developing, implementing and operating the project, including materials and equipment.
- Consumables, materials, animals, services, etc., directly related to the project.
- Project supplement for Danish Universities only. The agreement on Project Supplement applies, under which all approved project-specific scientific university FTEs (PhDs, post docs, and research assistants) trigger a yearly fixed project supplement to the universities.
- Direct administrative support, not applicable to Danish universities (only for Danish hospitals, foreign universities and hospitals) up to 5% of, and included in, the total funding applied for.
- Bench Fee, not applicable to Danish universities (only for Danish hospitals, foreign universities and hospitals) support for individual researchers for the coverage of direct expenses needed to conduct the research project applied for (must be specified in the budget), applicable only for institutions where the fixed project supplement does not apply.

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) only for Danish hospitals, foreign universities and hospitals.

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.

Direct administrative support (not applicable to Danish universities) only for Danish hospitals, foreign universities and hospitals.

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 or co-applicant(s) (**it is essential, that applicant's own salary must be covered throughout the entire project period**).
- 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.
- 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 internal NNF policies. In general, NNF will not fund projects where weight loss in a trial using anti-obesity medication is a primary goal.

1.5 Language

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

1.6 Application process and selection criteria

There are two phases in the application process.

Phase 1:

The application for Phase 1 consists of a brief concept note describing the proposed research project and a high-level budget. This is evaluated internally in the Novo Nordisk Foundation and selected applicants will be invited to Phase 2. The Foundation will not provide feedback in case an application is declined in Phase 1. Applicants will be notified in April regarding either rejection or invitation to submit a phase two full application.

Phase 2:

Applicants will be asked to submit a full application which will be evaluated by external peer review.

The peer review will be conducted by international experts in the research area, and a summary of the anonymous peer review feedback will, in writing, be shared with the applicants post granting decision, regardless of the outcome of that decision. The peer review is meant as valuable feedback regarding the projects. It will not be possible to submit objections to the funding decision nor the peer review.

The applications will primarily be assessed based on the following criteria:

- Fit within the outlined research area and scope of the call
- Originality and feasibility of the research and scoping of the project in relation to the challenge to be solved
- Scientific quality, state of the art, and methodologies in the project
- Merits and past performance of main applicant and co-applicant(s) relative to age and current career stage, as well as the research team's ability to perform the proposed project

- Synergies and scientific potential with regards to the international collaboration in this research field between main applicant's and co-applicants' institutions.

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 **Applicant Details** section.

When all applications in Phase 2 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.



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.

The main person responsible for the application can enter their details through the Applicant Details-task with the type 'Applicant'. After filling in all mandatory fields, the applicant should complete the task to save the details.

CV for main applicant: Can be a maximum of 4,000 characters.

Please include in your CV: A short bibliographic overview summarizing total number of peer-reviewed publications, number of first authorships, number of corresponding authorships, number of citations, and H-index.

Publications list: Can be a maximum of 5,000 characters (including spaces, line breaks and special characters). Please only include the 10 most relevant publications for evaluating your merits. Include a complete specification of all authors for each publication. Applicants are strongly encouraged to provide a full list of publications in ORCID.

Supplementary Information (under Applicant Information): This field can be utilized to describe special circumstances regarding your application that the evaluation committee should be aware of, e.g. current terms of employment. Please do not include any personal information of a sensitive nature, e.g. illnesses, family conditions.

3.2 Co-applicant(s)

For this call, co-applicants are mandatory. There must be at least one co-applicant and a maximum of two co-applicants (please refer to 1.3 Eligibility for more details). Co-applicant(s)

are expected to actively participate in organising and implementing the project and should, consequently, be allocated a share of the grant. The project description should clearly describe the role of all co-applicants, and the budget should clearly indicate the co-applicants' allocation of the total budget. Co-applicant(s) 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.

CV for Co-applicant: Can be a maximum of 4,000 characters.

Please include in your CV: A short bibliographic overview summarizing total number of peer-reviewed publications, number of first authorships, number of corresponding authorships, number of citations, and H-index.

Publications list: Can be a maximum of 2,500 characters (including spaces, line breaks and special characters). Please only include the 5 most relevant publications for evaluating your merits. Include a complete specification of all authors for each publication. Applicants are strongly encouraged to provide a full list of publications in ORCID.

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 Phase 1: 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).

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The Phase 1 project description is a short concept note/expression of interest (limited to 10,000 characters, including spaces, line breaks and special characters), which should include the following:

- Description of the research project (brief background, aims, hypotheses)
- How the research fits within the scope of the call and which challenge(s) of the field the project addresses
- Project originality, expected outcomes, and short- and long-term impact of the research
- How the mechanistic research being proposed could potentially translate into clinical medicine
- An outline of how the research group will collaborate and what makes this particular international project team well suited to address the proposed challenge

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*1550 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, non-confidential summary for non-experts in lay language (maximum 1000 characters, including spaces, line breaks and special characters).

3.5 Phase 1: Budget

Please enter the total requested budget in the budget field. A detailed budget is not required for Phase 1.

3.6 Phase 1: Appendices

In Phase 1, you are requested to submit a hosting letter from the research institution hosting the main applicant.

- The letter must confirm 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.
- The hosting letter must be signed by the management. If the main applicant is the Head of Department or otherwise part of the management, the hosting letter or letter of support must be signed by someone from the management level above the main applicant. **Applicants are not permitted to sign their own hosting letter.**

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. **Applications may be administratively rejected if any mandatory information and/or appendices are missing or incomplete.**

3.7 Phase 2: Proposal

PROJECT TITLE

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

BRIEF PROJECT DESCRIPTION

(Maximum 2,000 characters, including spaces, line breaks and special characters).

In this field, please provide a brief stand-alone high-level summary of the project describing the scientific goals, significance, originality, and application and impact of the research project.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The Phase 2 project description is a detailed project proposal (limited to 30,000 characters, including spaces, line breaks and special characters), which should be sufficiently detailed to allow thorough scientific review. This full application should include:

- Aims and purpose of the research project including its relevance to the grant's purpose, and hypothesis to be addressed.
- Introduction and background, highlighting the knowledge gap that this research seeks to address.
- 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 how this project addresses a gap in knowledge relating to the mechanistic understanding of sex-related differences in cardiovascular disease.
- Expected long- and short-term impact of the research on the broader field of sex-related differences in cardiovascular disease.
- Contingency plan and risk mitigation strategies.
- Contribution and roles of main applicant and co-applicant(s) including description of how collaboration will take place practically, including for example in experimental or analytical activities and sharing of in-kind resources.

Abbreviations should be defined at first use, and preferably a list of abbreviations should be included in the project description.

ILLUSTRATION UPLOADS

A maximum of four illustrations can be uploaded here.

The following file formats for illustrations are accepted in the system: JPG, JPEG, PNG and BMP. The maximum accepted size for each illustration is 50 MB and 1050*1550 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, non-confidential summary for non-experts in lay language (English). If the application is awarded a grant, the text may be used for publication (maximum 1000 characters, including spaces, line breaks and special characters).

3.8 Phase 2: 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. A detailed budget is required for Phase 2.

3.9 Phase 2: Appendices

Support letter: For co-applicant(s), a support letter from the co-applicants' institution must also be submitted, confirming that, if granted:

- a. 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.
- b. 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. **Applications may be administratively rejected if any mandatory information and/or appendices are missing or incomplete.**