novo nordisk
foundation

Benefitting people and society

Guidelines for applicants

INFECTIOUS DISEASES
CATALYST GRANTS 2025

Facts about the call

Total amount available for granting:
DKK 26 million

Amount available per grant:
Up to DKK 3.5 million per grant for projects with a single applicant (one PI).
Up to DKK 6.5 million per grant for collaborative projects (one PI plus one co-PI).

Call opens:
18 February 2025

Call closes:
7 May 2025, 2pm Copenhagen time

Applicant notification:
October 2025

Earliest start date:
1 November 2025

Latest start date:
1 October 2026

Review committee:
Internal NNF committee and international peer review

Contact:
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Grant Manager
E-mail: fgo@novo.dk

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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 Infectious Diseases – Catalyst Grants

1.1 Purpose

The purpose of the "Infectious Diseases – Catalyst Grants" programme is to provide catalytic funding for exploratory research projects within the thematic research areas outlined below. Within these thematic areas, the aim is to stimulate Danish research, strengthen international collaborations, and to initiate innovative research projects with exceptional potential for future direct impact on global challenges.

1.2 Thematic Research Areas

Research projects suitable for funding within the call must:
- Be in scope of at least one of the three thematic research areas outlined below.
- Be use-inspired i.e., the research project must enhance fundamental knowledge and include considerations of potential application/translation of the knowledge gained towards generating better and needed tools. The scientific rationale, concept, and research direction should be driven by the potential use and/or translation of that knowledge.
- Have clear aims/goals where it is articulated what outcomes are expected to be catalysed by this project, and the potential future impact of these outcomes (beyond this project).

Pathogenic Fungi
Research and discoveries are needed to develop new and effective prevention, diagnostic and treatment tools for the growing threat of invasive fungal infections and the rise of antifungal resistance. The pathogenic fungi prioritised for this call are the 19 Fungal Priority Pathogens listed by the World Health Organization.

Areas of research could be (but are not limited to):
- Target exploration and validation of novel potential therapeutic targets.
- Biomarker identification for future potential diagnostic tools.
- Understanding fungal biology or host-pathogen interactions that provide insights into potential vulnerabilities that could be targeted therapeutically or preventatively.
- Mechanisms of antifungal resistance and improved strategies to mitigate emergence and spread of drug-resistant strains.

- Enabling tools and technologies such as the establishment of assays, strains, or animal models for improved translational efforts.

Novel AMR Tools

The current clinical pipeline for combatting antimicrobial resistance (AMR) is inadequate and urgently requires new and innovative solutions. Projects supported under this theme are exploratory projects that investigate rationally designed and novel approaches to prevent, diagnose or treat antimicrobial resistant bacterial infections. Pathogens listed on the WHO Bacterial Priority Pathogen List, 2024 or the US CDC Antibiotic Resistance Threats Report are prioritised.

Areas of research could be (but are not limited to):
- Drug discovery, including promising novel treatment modalities such as phages, antibodies, aptamers, cyclopeptides, drug conjugates, targeted protein degradation etc.
- Novel target exploration and validation.
- Dual-action or novel combination therapies.
- Rapid, point-of-care diagnostic tools.

Harnessing Innate Immunity

Innate immunity provides a rapid, 'front-line' defence against respiratory pathogens through the recognition of pathogen-associated molecular patterns (PAMPs). Although pathogens can evade innate immunity, one strategy is to boost innate defences using immunostimulatory molecules. This would give individuals an advantage over the pathogen(s) by promoting an early or more efficient innate immune response. The objective of this theme is to better understand how innovative tools can be developed and used to induce innate immunity and broadly counteract respiratory infections.

Areas of research must have applicability to broadly protective responses (i.e. more than one respiratory pathogen), and can focus on:
- The underlying mechanisms of immune stimulation.
- Duration and type of protection, including the interplay between central vs tissue-specific factors, epigenetic signatures, and metabolic pathways.
- Identification and characterization of novel therapeutic targets and/or novel immunomodulators.

1.3   Eligibility

- The main applicant must be anchored and have their primary employment and research group at a university, hospital, or other non-profit research institution in Denmark.
- The main applicant must be an established investigator with their own line of research.
- The main applicant must be employed at the institution they are applying from and must be guaranteed their own salary for the entire project period.
- It is possible to include one international co-applicant in the project who is anchored and has their primary employment and research group at a university, hospital, or

other non-profit research organisation outside of Denmark. If an international co-applicant is included, they must significantly contribute to the scientific advancement of the project and receive a significant part of the funding. Further, it must be clear from the application how the project collaboration is ensured, and the work and budget is distributed.
- Collaboration with for-profit research partners (biotech, industry etc.) is possible, but funding cannot be awarded to for-profit research partner(s), unless they act as sub-contractors (e.g., consultants, service providers, vendors, etc.).

Applicants who received an Infectious Diseases – Catalyst Grant in 2024 cannot apply for one in 2025. Applying for this call will not affect your eligibility to apply for other NNF calls and vice versa (e.g., Project Grants in Bioscience and Basic Biomedicine or Clinical and Translational Medicine). However, **you cannot apply to other NNF calls with a project that is overlapping in scope while the assessment of your application to this call is ongoing.**

1.4   Funding

A total of DKK 26 million is available for granting in this call in 2025.

The individual grants awarded can have one of two different granting frameworks:
1) For each grant where there is only one applicant based in Denmark, up to DKK 3.5 million can be awarded, with a grant period of up to 3 years.
2) For each grant where there is a Danish main applicant and a co-applicant based abroad, up to DKK 6.5 million can be awarded, with a grant period of up to 3 years. The budget does not have to be split evenly between the main and co-applicant institutions, but if one institution will receive significantly more funding, a clear justification must be provided.

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

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

- **Consumables and operating expenses**: Direct expenses for developing, implementing and operating the project, including materials, access to infrastructure, lab consumables, chemicals, reagents, research animals, analysis services, data collection and storage, etc.
- **Bench fee*** (not applicable to Danish universities).
- **Project supplement for research grants**** (Danish universities only).
- **Administrative expenses***** (not applicable to Danish universities).

Full-time equivalents (FTEs)
For each salary entry, please specify the FTE in years within the designated FTE field. This will indicate the proportion of a full-time position that the project funding will support for each year of the grant period. One full-time employee for one year equals 1.0 FTE.

*Bench fee (not applicable to Danish universities)
Bench fee can be included in the budget for support of individual researchers to cover expenses needed to conduct the proposed research.

Bench fee is calculated per academic employee actively working on the project (eligible to apply for salary). It may only be used for expenses related to the research project which cannot be included within another individual budget category. Bench fee may account for a maximum of DKK 8,000 per month per FTE. The budget must specify the expenses covered by the bench fee, which may include:
- Common or shared laboratory expenses and consumables
- Laboratory utilities (electricity, gas, water)
- Maintenance of essential equipment
- Service contracts
- Technical and IT support

PLEASE NOTE that bench fee cannot cover rent, administrative support, representation, social contributions etc. A valid bench fee policy in line with the Foundation's requirements must be available at the time of application, and this official documentation from the administrating/co-applicant's institution must be provided upon request.

**Project supplement for research grants: (Danish universities only)
The project supplement contributes to the coverage of indirect costs at Danish universities, and replaces budget posts such as administrative costs, bench fee and parental leave.

More information on the joint model for project supplement is found at [Universities Denmark's website](). Questions related to the project supplement should be directed to the research support units at your university.

***Administrative support** (not applicable to Danish universities)
Administrative support may account for a maximum of 5% of the total budget and must be included therein. The administrative support:
- can cover expenses such as for accounting, payment of salaries, purchasing, hiring, as well as auditing and financial reporting on the project
- cannot cover administrative expenses that are not directly related to the project
- can via the host institution be shared between the institutions of the main- and co-applicant(s), as detailed in the application budget
- is not automatically included in the grant and must be stated/applied for in the application budget but should not be specified in detail

The Foundation will not award funding for:
- Salary for the main applicant
- Commercial activities
- Overhead/indirect costs (such as rent, electricity, water and maintenance)
- Double funding of projects:
  - If the applicant has received funding for the proposed project from other sources, in part or in full, this must be accounted for in the budget, as no budgetary overlaps are allowed
  - If an identical or overlapping project proposal has been submitted to other funding institutions than the Foundation, it must be noted in the application
  - If the applicant receives funding for the project, or parts of the project, from other sources following submission of the application to the Foundation, the Foundation must be informed immediately

1.5   Language

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

1.6   Application process and assessment criteria

All submitted applications will initially be evaluated and triaged internally in the Novo Nordisk Foundation. Selected applications will subsequently be evaluated by external peer review Submitted applications that will not progress to peer review will be informed. The Foundation will not provide feedback in case an application is declined and the application has not been evaluated by external peer review.

The peer review will be conducted by international experts in the relevant fields, and the anonymous peer review report will, in writing, be shared with the applicants post granting decision, regardless of the outcome of that decision. The peer review report is meant as

valuable feed-back regarding the projects. It will not be possible to submit objections to either the funding decision or the peer review.

The applications will primarily be assessed based on the following criteria:
- Fit within the outlined thematic research areas.
- Originality, feasibility, translatability, and potential for future impact, preferentially in the form of needed globally implementable tools.
- Scientific quality, state of the art, and methodologies in the project.

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 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.

3.2 Co-applicant(s)

For this call, up to one co-applicant is permitted for the application. Co-applicants are expected to actively participate in organising and implementing the project and should, consequently, be allocated a share of the grant. The project description should clearly describe the role of the co-applicant, and the budget should clearly indicate the co-applicant's allocation of the total budget. Co-applicants must be invited through NORMA and subsequently enter their details in the system. Please follow the instructions in NORMA on how to invite co-applicants to your application.

Please note that co-applicants can read, edit and upload information into the application portal, **but only the main applicant is able to submit the final application.**

Inviting co-applicants can be time-consuming.
Please invite any co-applicant(s) as soon as possible and well
in advance of the submission deadline.

3.3   Institution

Please provide information about the institution where the grant will be administered. This institution is where the main applicant will be employed during the grant period, and the institution that will ultimately be responsible for administering and allocating the grant, including budgeting, financial reporting and staff supported by the grant.

It can take up to five working days to register a new administrating institution in NORMA.
The application cannot be submitted before the institution has been registered.

3.4   Proposal

Describe the project using the fields in the **Proposal** tab.

BRIEF PROJECT DESCRIPTION (maximum 2000 characters, including spaces)
In this field, please provide a brief stand-alone high-level summary of the project describing the scientific goals, significance, originality, and potential application and impact of the research project.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION (maximum 20,000 characters including spaces)
The project description should be sufficient in experimental details for a thorough scientific review and include the following:
- Aims/Goals/Objectives of the research project.
- Brief background/introduction.
- Research plan including experimental approaches, methods, tools, and technologies.
- Expected outcome(s), milestones, and deliverables including timeline. Please include a Gantt chart as one of the uploaded figures.
- Description of what is catalysed by this project, the need and potential impact of this research, and next steps for the use and/or translation of the knowledge gained.
- Contingency plan(s) and risk mitigation strategies.
- Contribution and roles of main applicant and co-applicant (if included) including interdependencies and organizational outline.

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

ILLUSTRATION UPLOADS
A maximum of four illustrations can be uploaded here.

The following file formats for illustrations are accepted in the system: JPG, JPEG, PNG and BMP. The maximum accepted size for each illustration is 50 MB and 1050*1650 pixels.

LITERATURE REFERENCES
Please provide the reference information for the literature cited in the project description (maximum 8000 characters, including spaces).

LAY PROJECT DESCRIPTION
Please provide a brief summary for non-experts in lay language. If the application is awarded a grant, the text may be used for publication (maximum 1000 characters, including spaces, line breaks and special characters).

3.5 Budget

Enter the project grant period, and the budget template will become available.
Only budget information submitted via the **Budget** tab will be considered in the review process. Any additional budget information attached under **Appendices** (or any other tabs) will not be considered.

3.6 Appendices

1) **Hosting letter.** A hosting letter from the administrating institution confirming that, if granted:
    o The administrating institution will host the project and be the Grant Recipient.
    o The applicant is an established investigator with their own line of research and will be employed for the duration of the project at the administrating institution.
    o If the main applicant is Head of Department or otherwise part of the management, the hosting letter must be signed by someone from the management level above the main applicant.
2) **Support letter** If there is a co-applicant included in the application, a support letter from the co-applicant's institution must also be submitted, confirming that, if granted:
    o 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.
    o 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.