



# PROJECT GRANTS IN THE NATURAL AND TECHNICAL SCIENCES 2023

Information and guidelines for applicants

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## Information about the call

### **Grant capital**

DKK 60 million

### **Award amount**

Grants of up to DKK 3 million for up to 3 years - with a possible extension to 4 years to cover 4-year PhD stipends

### **Application form opens**

17 May 2023

### **Application deadline**

6 September 2023, 14.00 CEST

### **Applicant notification**

December 2023

### **Earliest start date**

1 January 2024

### **Latest start date**

1 January 2025

### **Review committee**

Committee for the Natural and Technical Sciences

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# 1 PROJECT GRANTS IN THE NATURAL AND TECHNICAL SCIENCES

These 2023 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, eligibility criteria, and evaluation process.
- **Section 2** gives technical guidance for how to access and navigate in the application and grant management system NORMA.
- **Section 3** provides essential information and requirements for applying 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 call for Project Grants in the Natural and Technical Sciences seeks to promote Danish fundamental research at the highest international level within the natural and technical sciences, particularly for projects with potential interdisciplinary applications within life science, or health science, or sustainability.

## 1.2 AREAS OF SUPPORT

The call supports fundamental research within the natural and technical sciences, including, e.g., physics, chemistry, mathematics, computer science, and technical sciences.

In alignment with the 2030 Strategy for the Novo Nordisk Foundation, applications for Project Grants in the Natural and Technical Sciences **must describe how the outcome of the project may have potential future applications within life science, health science, or sustainability**. Such potential applications may be within the project period but could also be on timescales longer than the project period.

### NOT WITHIN THE SCOPE OF THIS CALL

The Novo Nordisk Foundation offers similar calls for project grants within the five areas listed below. Projects focused on these five areas are not eligible for the Project Grants in the Natural and Technical Sciences call:

- Bioscience and basic biomedicine

- Endocrinology and metabolism
- Industrial and environmental biotechnology
- Plant science, agriculture, and food science
- Clinical and translational medicine

Other areas which are not within the scope of the call (the list is not exhaustive):

- Cosmology
- Zoology
- Biotechnology
- Projects that are primarily retrospective or primarily of historical value

Applicants may submit only one application for one of the 2023 Project Grant calls.

Applicants are welcome to contact the Foundation with questions regarding eligible areas of support for the Project Grants in the Natural and Technical Sciences call.

### **1.3 ELIGIBILITY**

#### **Who**

Principal investigators are eligible to apply, i.e., experienced independent researchers who have already established their own line of research or researchers who are in the process of establishing themselves as independent researchers.

The applicant must be at least 80% affiliated with the administering Danish research institution.

As this grant cannot cover salary of the grantee, the applicant must be guaranteed his or her own salary for the entire project period from other sources.

Applications from PhD students will not be taken into consideration.

#### **Where**

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

A signed hosting letter from the administering Danish research institution must be provided (see section 3.5 for requirements).

#### **What**

The application must describe a clearly defined research project with an appropriate budget. The project can be an independent project, a 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 natural and technical sciences are individual grants at the disposal of the applicant. If the applied project involves collaboration, the collaboration must be described in the project description, however, the applicant must be the clear driver of the project and the applicant's research must be central to the project. Invitation of co-applicants is not possible within this call.

## IMPORTANT RULES

- Applicants may submit only one application to one of the 2023 NNF calls of the Project Grant type, which include Project Grants in the Natural and Technical Sciences, Bioscience and Basic Biomedicine, Endocrinology and Metabolism, Plant Science, Agriculture, and Food Biotechnology, Industrial Biotechnology and Environmental Biotechnology, and Clinical and Translational Medicine.
- The application deadline for Project Grants in the Natural and Technical Sciences is aligned with the deadline for the Project Grants in Bioscience and Basic Biomedicine. The Novo Nordisk Foundation will transfer applications between these calls if judged to be scientifically appropriate.
- Applicants for Project Grants in the Natural and Technical Sciences are not allowed to be the principal investigator of the following grant types from the Novo Nordisk Foundation at the time of commencing the Project Grant: Investigator Grants, Exploratory Interdisciplinary Synergy Grants, Interdisciplinary Synergy Grants, Challenge Grants, NERD Grants, Project Grants.

## 1.4 FUNDING

The grant budget for this call is up to DKK 60 million annually.

Applicants may apply for between DKK 300,000 and DKK 1 million per budget year for projects with a grant period of 1–3 years. Funds can be unevenly distributed over the project period; however, the total budget frame must be within DKK 300,000 – 3 million, correlating with the number of project years.

If the project includes a PhD stipend following a 4+4 scheme, the project period can be extended to 4 years, but with a maximum total budget of DKK 3 million.

Applicants may apply for funding for the following types of expenses if directly related to the execution of the project (see further details and restrictions in section 3.4):

- Salary for employees
- Tuition fee for PhD students
- Operating expenses
- Equipment
- Conference participation
- Travel
- Publication costs
- Bench fee
- Direct administrative expenses (maximum 5%)

### **NNF will not award funding for:**

- Own salary for principal investigator/applicant
- Commercial activities
- Overhead
- Double funding of projects:
  - The applicant cannot apply for projects or expenses already funded by other parties.
  - The project applied for may be partially funded by other parties, but such funding must be clearly detailed in the application.

- If the applicant receives funding for the project, or for parts of the project, from other sources following submission of the NNF application, NNF must be contacted immediately.



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.

## 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>

Overall timeline for the call:



Applicants will be notified about the result of the evaluation of the [Committee for the Natural and Technical Sciences](#) in an e-mail sent from [norma-noreply@novo.dk](mailto: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 [Committee for the Natural and Technical Sciences](#) will assess the applications based on the quality, novelty, and feasibility of the project, and the merits and commitment of the applicant.

**During a trial period in 2022-2024, 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.

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 active grants before submission of a new application to NNF. If you apply while having an active grant from NNF, you must describe how the proposed project is different from and/or coherent with already funded projects and briefly describe the progress of these.

If you have active grants from other funding agencies, public or private, any synergies between the proposed project and the already funded projects should be described.

## 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](mailto: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 is 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, including essential information and requirements concerning the application's content, structure, and budget.

### 3.1 APPLICANT

The **APPLICANT** tab collects various information about the main applicant.

#### APPLICANT DETAILS

Open the **APPLICANT DETAILS**-section to detail your experience, affiliation, publication history, application history with NNF, etc.

Please note the following requirements:

- **CV:** Maximum 4,000 characters. Include in your CV 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.
- **Publication list:** Maximum 5,000 characters. Include the up to 10 most relevant publications for evaluating your merits. Include names of all authors for each publication with your own name highlighted. You are strongly encouraged to include a link to an updated profile (with full publication list) in ORCID, Google Scholar, Web of Science, Scopus, or similar.
- **Summary of own research:** Maximum 2,000 characters. Summarise your research focus and main contributions and achievements relevant for the present application.
- **Supplementary 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 other grants obtained within the past five years and indicate how much of your research time (in %) is committed to each of these grants.
  - Indicate how much of your research time (in %) you intend to commit to the proposed project.

Do not upload any supporting documents in this tab. Only the documents requested in section 3.5 should be provided, and only in the **APPENDICES** tab.

Please note that you should only click COMPLETE TASK in APPLICANT DETAILS when you are ready to submit the application, as you will not be able to edit the provided information afterwards. Contact NORMA Support: norma-support@novo.dk if you need to have the APPLICANT DETAILS-section reopened.

## 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 administering 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 administering institution in good time.

## 3.3 PROPOSAL

Describe the project using the fields on the PROPOSAL tab. Each field (Project title, Brief project description, Project description, Illustration uploads, Literature References, and Lay project description) will have a short instruction text describing the expected input and maximum characters available.

### PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Please describe your research clearly and in detail (maximum 20,000 characters, including spaces), including the following information:

- Purpose, state-of-the-art, background, hypotheses, methods, implementation, novelty, feasibility, and significance of the project outcome.
- In a separate paragraph: How the outcome of the proposed research may have potential future application, possibly in the long-term, within life science, health science, or sustainability.
- Synergy of the proposed project with already funded activities or ongoing projects.
- If the applied project involves collaboration, describe its nature and purpose, and the role of the collaborator.
- In a separate paragraph: If you are resubmitting a project proposal that has been submitted to Project Grants for the Natural and Technical Sciences in a previous call, highlight changes and improvements.



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

### 3.4 BUDGET

The budget for the project applied for only comprises the information entered on the BUDGET tab. Additional budget information attached under UPLOADS or added on any other tabs than BUDGET will not be considered.

#### GRANT PERIOD

Before you can fill in the budget template, start by entering the start and end dates for the grant. This will determine the number of years available from the budget template. The grant period is the duration of NNF's grant for the project, and the budget counts years following the project start date rather than calendar years.

If applying for a 4-year project (due to a 4+4 PhD student), the budget for the fourth year should be included in the budget for year 3. If the project is granted, the project period can subsequently be extended by the grant holder through a change request to the NNF.

#### CREATE BUDGET

After saving the project start and end dates, the budget template will become available to edit. The budget will open in a new tab, in which you will need to add the subcategories you need for your budget. Please follow the instructions at the top of the screen to complete the budget.

#### Notes:

- The budget continuously saves changes you have made without the need to manually save. You are free to leave the budget at any time and come back at a later point.
- When you are done filling in your budget, please use the SAVE AND CLOSE button. This will check that all information has been filled out correctly and in accordance with the guidelines, saving the budget to your application.
- You can now return to the BUDGET tab. A summary of the budget will be displayed, review it to ensure that it is correct.
- The full budget details can be viewed or edited at any time before submission of the application by reopening the budget template.

#### BUDGET

Applicants may apply for between DKK 300,000 and DKK 1 million per budget year for projects with a grant period of 1–3 years. Funds can be unevenly distributed over the project period; however, the total budget frame must be within DKK 300,000–3 million, correlating with the number of project years.

If the project includes a PhD stipend following a 4+4 scheme, the project period can be extended to 4 years, but with a maximum budget of DKK 3 million. See instructions above (Grant Period section).

#### Full-time equivalents (FTE)

For salary items, the number of full-time equivalents in years must be stated in the field FTE. One full-time employee for one year equals 1.0 FTE. Most institutions have defined a standard number of annual working hours which equals 1.0 FTE. NNF does not require the institutions to use a particular number of annual working hours.

EXAMPLE: To find the FTE for e.g. 74 hours, the calculation is: 74 (hours) / 1554 (standard annual hours (example)) = 0.05, which is what should be stated in the FTE field.



For salary items, the number of full-time equivalents in years must be stated in the field FTE.

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

- **Salary for employees:** Postdoctoral researchers, PhD students, technicians, and researchers 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, chemicals, utensils, data collection, analyses, etc.
- **Equipment:** Smaller equipment and apparatus required for the project.
- **Conference participation:** Travel and registration expenses in relation to presenting the project at conferences and workshops.
- **Travel:** Expenses for, e.g., experiments carried out in other labs for a limited time, meetings, or workshops.
- **Publication costs:** Of results emanating from the proposed research.
- **Bench fees,** up to DKK 8,000 per month per Full Time Equivalent (FTE) working on the project, 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 and may only be used for expenses that are related to the research project and which cannot be included within another individual budget category. The budget must specify the expenses covered by the bench fees, 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 fees cannot cover rent, administrative support, representation, social contributions, etc. 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. Documentation that the administrating institution has a general bench fee policy should be included in the Letter of Support from the administrating institution (see section 3.5) enclosed as link or appendix. An unspecified bench fee without documentation will not be accepted.

- **Direct administrative expenses:** Administrative support may account for a maximum of 5% of the total budget:
  - 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.
  - Are not automatically included in the grant and must be stated/applied for in the application budget but should not be specified in detail.

Any comments about the budget can be entered in the SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION field.

**NNF will not award funding for:**

- Own salary for principal investigator/applicant
- Commercial activities
- Overhead
- Double funding of projects



Applicants may only apply for the types of expenses listed in section 3.4.

Funding, both received and applied for, from the applicant's own organisation and from other sources should be entered under ADDITIONAL CONTRIBUTIONS FOR THE PROJECT. The amount entered should be the total sum for the entire grant period.

The NNF does not allow double funding and there can be no budgetary overlaps between projects. It must be clearly described in the INFORMATION FOR ADDITIONAL CONTRIBUTIONS field what the additional contributions cover and how the proposed project differs from any projects already funded or applied for from other parties than NNF. If the applicant, post application submission, receives funding for the project or parts of the applied project from others, the NNF must be informed immediately.

### 3.5 APPENDICES

Please provide a signed letter from the administering institution, confirming that the institution will host the project, including providing the required infrastructure, such as laboratory and office facilities, and administration of the grant (*Hosting letter*).

If a bench fee is included in the budget, the hosting letter must confirm that this fee is part of the general expense policy of the administering institution and complies to the restrictions described in section 3.4 and include documentation of the policy (enclosed as link or as part of the appendix).

The appendix must be in PDF format. NORMA automatically places it at the end of the application.

DO NOT provide any other appendices (no recommendations, support letters from collaborators, quotes for equipment, etc).

May 2023

## The Novo Nordisk Foundation

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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.