

Guidelines for applicants

ASCENDING INVESTIGATOR GRANT 2025

**ENDOCRINOLOGY AND METABOLISM
– NORDIC REGION**



Facts about the call

Total amount available for granting:
DKK **45.6** million

Amount available per grant:
Up to DKK **11.4 million**

Call opens: **15 November 2024** Call closes:
21 January 2025 Copenhagen time

Applicant notification:
May 2025

Earliest start date: **1 June 2025** Latest start date:
1 May 2026

Review committee:
Committee on Endocrinology and Metabolism

Contact:
Fiona Goldizen
Grant Manager
E-mail: fgo@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.



ASCENDING INVESTIGATOR GRANT - ENDOCRINOLOGY AND METABOLISM – NORDIC REGION

1 Purpose

To stimulate the continued development of excellent research leaders, and promote Nordic research at a high international level, NNF seeks to support the consolidation of accomplished associate professors with ambitious projects within endocrinology and metabolism to understand the human organism and the mechanisms underlying health and disease at a basic and clinical level. Up to four grants are available for funding in 2025.

1.1 Areas of support

The overall goal is to obtain new knowledge and better treatment or prevention of disease relevant to the human organism within the areas of endocrinology and metabolism, relating to cellular energy homeostasis, and hormonal disorders of the endocrine system.

Areas supported include research involving patients and/or clinical practice but could also include animal models, model organisms, cellular- or sub-cellular systems (with clear whole-body relevance) as well as in silico analysis, with the overall purpose of solving challenges related to endocrinology and metabolism in health and disease. **Please note that endocrinology is not restricted to diabetes. Research projects within all subfields of endocrinology**, e.g., thyroid, reproduction, or bone and calcium metabolism can be supported.

Projects within cancer research will not be approved, however projects on e.g., endocrine tumours where the topic is focused on signalling or crosstalk (not strictly related to cancer development) will be taken into consideration.

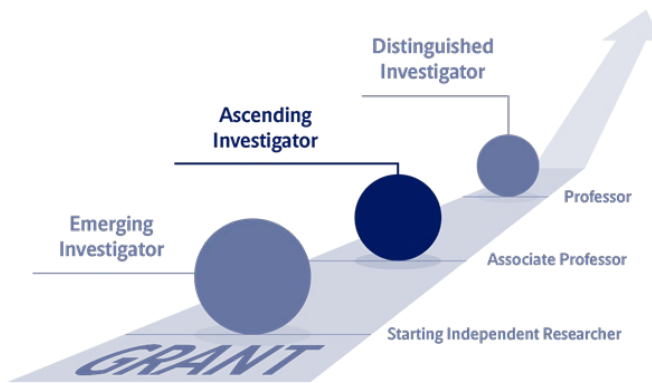
The Novo Nordisk Foundation offers mutually exclusive calls within the areas listed below. It is the responsibility of the applicant to apply within the call that is the most appropriate to her/his project proposal:

- Clinical and translational medicine (for clinicians)

- Bioscience and basic biomedicine
- Industrial and environmental biotechnology
- Plant science, agriculture and food biotechnology
- Natural and technical sciences (NERD and RECRUIT)

1.2 THE RESEARCH LEADER PROGRAMME

To support the best and the most talented research leaders at all steps of their careers from start-up to established principal investigators, NNF offers three specific grants within the 'Research Leader Programme'. The calls 'Emerging', 'Ascending', and 'Distinguished' each target principal investigators at specific career-stages, and applicants are encouraged to familiarise themselves with the requirements in each call.



1.2.1 'ASCENDING' PROFILE

The Ascending Investigator grant is for excellent and independent associate professors who have the ambition and potential to rise to the highest international level within their research fields, and who already have demonstrated their research leader potential. Applicants should have their own research group and individual research profile. In addition, they are expected to have a documented track record of peer-reviewed research with a high impact and must at the time of application have senior authorships. Key is that the project is novel, excellent, has the potential of high impact and is of a character that justifies a five-year grant of this magnitude and that the applicant has momentum in the current research track. After their PhD degree, applicants should ideally have approximately 7-18 years of subsequent research experience (parental leave excluded).

1.3 Eligibility

Who can apply:

Applicants should be associate professors, senior researchers or at an equivalent level. Applicants must have their own research group. Professors or researchers who at the time of application have been offered and/or accepted a professorship, including MSO, cannot apply for this call – but can apply for NNF's 'Distinguished Investigator' grant. **If you are unsure about which Investigator grant to apply for, please reach out to fgo@novo.dk.**

- Applicants can be clinicians or basic/experimental researchers.
- For basic/experimental researchers, recipients of this grant must contribute to the pre-graduate teaching, classroom lectures or similar at their administrating institution. An Ascending Investigator grant cannot be used to cover a teaching substitute for the applicant.
- For clinicians, the applicant must commit 20% (1 workday) to the clinic or clinical related work.
- The applicant cannot have a grant portfolio exceeding an annual total of DKK 4 million (excluding possible overhead) in the year of commencing the project.
- The applicant cannot be a group leader in one of the NNF centres, where research support is included in the affiliation to the centre.

Where must the research take place:

- The project must be anchored at a hospital, university, or other non-profit research institution (administrating host institution) in a Nordic country (Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway or Sweden). It is a requirement that the Nordic administrating institution confirms that the project will take place at the given institution. A Hosting letter, signed by the head of the institute, must be uploaded with the application.

Collaboration and co-applicants:

- Co-applicants are not permitted for this call.
- Ascending Investigator grants are individual grants at the disposal of the grant recipient. If the applied project involves collaboration, the collaboration and the nature of the collaboration should be described in the project description, but the grant recipient must be the clear driver of the project.

IMPORTANT RULES

- An applicant may submit only one application to the Novo Nordisk Foundation for an 'Investigator grant' and cannot submit another application for an 'Investigator grant' while the application is under review. If an applicant submits more than one 'Investigator grant' application for simultaneous review, only the first application submitted will be evaluated, while the subsequent applications will receive administrative rejections.
- An applicant that holds an active 'Investigator grant' from the Novo Nordisk Foundation is only eligible to apply for a new 'Investigator grant' during the final year of the existing grant, and the two grant periods cannot overlap.
- While a project submitted to one call in the Novo Nordisk Foundation is under evaluation, a similar or overlapping project cannot be submitted to other calls from the Novo Nordisk Foundation. I.e., projects submitted to this call cannot be submitted to any other calls in the Novo Nordisk Foundation until the outcome of this call has been published.

'Investigator grants' in the Novo Nordisk Foundation defined to include the following

calls/grants across all funding areas: Emerging Investigator, Ascending Investigator, Distinguished Investigator, NNF Young Investigator Award, NNF Laureate research grants, RECRUIT and NERD.

1.4 Funding

A total of up to DKK 45.6 million is available for granting. For each grant, **approximately DKK 2.28 million can be awarded per year**, over a 5-year grant period, for a total budget of **DKK 11.4 million per grant**.

Up to four 5-year Ascending Investigator grants can be awarded.

However, in the case of many applications of exceptionally high quality within one career stage, an amount of up to DKK 11.4 million of the total grant budget may exceptionally be transferred between the three calls under the Research Leader Programme within the same committee (ENDO Emerging, Ascending and Distinguished).

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

- **Salary for the applicant** for all or part of the project period if the applicant is not tenured or otherwise guaranteed his or her own salary in all or part of the project period.
- **Salary for research and technical assistance**, including postdoctoral researchers, PhD students (incl. tuition fee up to DKK 80,000 per budget year, which must be specified in the budget), technicians and research-year students.
- **Operating expenses**, e.g., lab consumables, chemicals and reagents, research animals, sequencing/proteomics and other analysis services directly related to the project.
- **Equipment** required for the project, however not exceeding 20% of the budget total.
- **Conference participation** directly related to the project, i.e., conference and workshop participation and presentation of research results, including travel up to DKK 50,000 per budget year.
- **Travel expenses** directly related to the project, i.e., experiments carried out in other labs for a limited period.
- **Publication of results** emanating from the research project, up to DKK 50,000 per budget year.
- **Project supplement for research grants** (Danish universities only)
- **Bench fee** (not applicable to Danish universities)
- **Administrative support** (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:

- 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

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.

PLEASE NOTE: The Foundation does not provide feedback cases where an application is declined.

1.7 Assessment criteria

NNF's [Committee on Endocrinology and Metabolism](#) will primarily assess the applications based on the following criteria:

- Quality (scientific originality and relevance) and impact
- Scientific approach
- Scientific environment and collaboration
- Investigator track record (background, training, expertise, and leadership potential). The applicant is assessed on her/his merits relative to age and career stage, potential and independence and the commitment to the applied project. Past mobility and international experience are considered advantageous.

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).



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.

MAIN APPLICANT

The main responsible party 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.

Your **CV** can be maximum 4,000 characters (including spaces and line breaks). 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.
- An overview of your current grants, and an indication of how much of your research time (in %) is committed to each of the projects.
- A short paragraph on your teaching obligations. If no teaching obligations are presently in place, please provide a short teaching plan for the grant period.
- For clinicians, please describe your current clinical responsibilities, including how and to what extent these will be continued during the project period.

Publication list can be a maximum of 5,000 characters. Please only include the 10 most relevant publications for evaluating your merits. Include a complete specification of all authors for each publication with your own name highlighted. Applicants are strongly encouraged to provide a full list of publications in ORCID.

Supplementary Information (under Applicant Information).

- Describe your terms of employment (where the project is to be carried out). Non-permanent employees should indicate when their current contracts are running out

and how their salaries are covered. Tenure-track employees should indicate when they are up for tenure.

- State how much of your research time (in %) you intend to commit to the project applied for.

PREVIOUS AND CURRENT GRANTS FROM NNF

If you have previously submitted other applications in the same calendar year, summarize how these applications are related to the current application.

If you have received any grants from NNF as an applicant or a co-applicant within the past five years, you must provide the application number, project title, grant period (in years), grant amount and the percentage share of the grant (100% if there is no co-applicant). Briefly summarize how any of the grants are related to the current application.

3.2 Institution

Please provide information about the institution where the grant will be administered. This institution is where 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.

3.3 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).

BRIEF PROJECT DESCRIPTION

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

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Please describe your proposed research project in detail – including purpose, background, methods, collaborations, and the significance and potential impact of the project. Please

include a short paragraph on how the proposed project is different from and/or coherent with project(s) already funded. (maximum 30,000 characters, including spaces, line breaks and special characters).

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

ILLUSTRATION UPLOADS

A maximum of four illustrations of 50 mb each can be uploaded here. Accepted formats are .jpg, .png, .gif, .bmp.

LITERATURE REFERENCES

Please provide the reference information for the literature cited in the project description (maximum 8,000 characters, including spaces and special characters).

LAY PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Please provide a brief summary for non-experts in lay language in English. If the application is awarded a grant, the text may be used for publication (maximum 1000 characters, including spaces 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

A hosting letter from the Nordic administrating institution, signed by the head of the institute, hospital or department must be included. The hosting letter must include:

- A confirmation from the administrating institution that they accept that the project will take place at the given institution and that the institution will provide the required infrastructure, such as laboratory and office space, and administration of the grant
- A confirmation that the administrating institution has agreed to the submitted budget and that the administrating institution will manage the potential grant according to this budget.
- In case the applicant is not a permanent employee at the administrating institution the terms of employment should be described. Also, if the applicant has multiple affiliations in addition to the one at the administrating institution (including affiliations to institutions abroad) the administrating institution must confirm the percentage time/affiliation that the applicant has to the administrating institution during the duration of this 5-year research project.

- A confirmation that the total external grant portfolio of the applicant does not exceed 4 million DKK (excluding possible overhead and not considering this application), in the year of commencing the project.

All other uploads that are not required, e.g., recommendations, offers on equipment etc. will not be taken into consideration.

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.