DISTINGUISHED INVESTIGATOR 2021
BIOSCIENCE AND BASIC BIOMEDICINE
Information and guidelines for applicants
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Information about the call

Grant capital:
DKK 20 million

Award amount
Up to DKK 10 million per grant

Application form opens:
October 29, 2020

Application deadline:
January 7, 2021, 2 pm

Applicant notification:
Beginning of May 2021

Earliest start date:
June 1, 2021

Latest start date:
April 1, 2022

Review committee:
Committee on Bioscience and Basic Biomedicine

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1 DISTINGUISHED INVESTIGATOR
Bioscience and Basic Biomedicine

These 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 and the evaluation and specifies the criteria for applicants and projects.
- **Section 2** provides the technical guidance for how to access and navigate in the application and grant management system NORMA.
- **Section 3** aids with essential information to include, and best practice of how to apply 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.

### 1.1 PURPOSE

The purpose of the ‘Distinguished Investigator – Bioscience and Basic Biomedicine’ grant is to support outstanding professors with ambitious projects relevant to understanding the human organism and/or basal mechanisms underlying health and disease thereby catalysing Danish fundamental research impacting better health through knowledge.

### 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 principle investigators, the Novo Nordisk Foundation offers three specific grants within the Research Leader Programme¹ (schematized below) to stimulate excellence and the possibility to pursue original and ambitious five-year projects. The calls ‘Emerging’, ‘Ascending’, and ‘Distinguished’ each target principle investigators at specific career-stages, and applicants are encouraged to familiarise themselves with the requirements in each call, to ensure they are eligible and apply for the appropriate call.

¹ Read more about the programme and previous recipients at [https://researchleaderprogramme.com/](https://researchleaderprogramme.com/)
1.2.1 ‘DISTINGUISHED’ PROFILE

The Distinguished Investigator grant is for outstanding professors who have demonstrated the ability to execute and lead research at the highest international level. The Distinguished Investigator grant is for professors of all ages. Key is that the project is novel, excellent, has potential high impact and is of a character that justifies a five-year grant of this magnitude.

1.3 RESEARCH AREAS OF SUPPORT

The fundamental research should be bioscientific and/or basic biomedical and the project relevant for understanding the human organism and/or basal mechanisms underlying health and disease. The research fields could be within, but are not limited to: molecular biology, cell biology, bioinformatics, modelling of biological systems, enzymology, genetics, microbiology, pharmacology, experimental physiology, biophysics, biochemistry, biology, and biostatistics etc. The research will typically be carried out in animals, model systems, cellular or subcellular systems, or in silico.

The Novo Nordisk Foundation offer mutually exclusive calls within the areas listed below. It is the responsibility of the applicant to apply within the call most appropriate:

- Endocrinology and metabolism
- Clinical and translational medicine (for clinicians)
- Natural and technical sciences (NERD)
- Innovation (Distinguished Innovator)

1.4 ELIGIBILITY

Who:

- Applicants must be professors (MSO included).
- Applicants must, during the project, be employed and have their primary research group in Denmark (only minor and/or time-limited affiliation with institutions abroad is allowed).
- This Distinguished Investigator call is intended for ‘full-time’ researchers (teaching obligations included) i.e. researchers with clinical obligations cannot apply for this grant.
- Recipients of this grant must contribute to the pre-graduate teaching environment at their host institution. A Distinguished Investigator grant must not be used to cover a teaching substitute for the applicant.

Where:

- The project must be anchored at a university, hospital or other non-profit research institution in Denmark. It is a requirement that the host institution confirms 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 hosting letter, signed by the head of the institute, must be included in the application.

What:

- The application must describe a clearly defined research project with an appropriate budget. The project can be an independent project, delimited project or a clearly defined part of a larger, running project. In the latter case, the large project must be briefly described.

Distinguished 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. Invitation of co-applicants is not possible within this call.
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 simultaneously review, only the first application submitted will be evaluated, while the subsequent applications will receive administrative rejections.

• An applicant that hold 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.

“Investigator grants” in the Novo Nordisk Foundation defined to include the following calls/grant across all funding areas: Emerging Investigator, Ascending Investigator, Distinguished Investigator, NNF Young Investigator Award, NNF Laureate research grants, Distinguished Innovator, and NERD.

1.5 FUNDING

A total of up to DKK 20 million is available for up to two 5-year grants, each of up to DKK 10 million with approximately DKK 2 million per year. Annual budget amounts can diverge from DKK 2 million per year if needed (e.g. due to equipment costs).

Applicants may apply for funding for the following types of expenses (see section 3.3. for details):

• salary for employees
• tuition fee
• operating expenses
• equipment
• conference participation
• travel
• publication costs
• bench fee
• direct administrative expenses (up to 5% of the total funding applied for)

This grant cannot cover overhead.

The Novo Nordisk Foundation does not allow double funding of projects.

- The applicant cannot apply for projects/budget posts already funded by other mechanisms
- The project applied for can be partially funded by other mechanisms, but such co-funding must be clearly stated in the application.
- If the applicant, post application submission, receives funding for the project or parts of the applied project from others, the Novo Nordisk Foundation must be contacted as soon as possible.

The grant may not be used to cover ‘overhead’ (i.e. rent, electricity, water, maintenance etc.)

1.6 LANGUAGE

The application and any additional uploads must be written in English
1.7 APPLICATION PROCESS
The application must be completed and submitted using NNF’s application and grant management system, NORMA, which can be accessed from: https://norma.novonordiskfonden.dk
Further information on how to access and navigate in NORMA can be found in chapter 2.

After the final granting decision, applicants will be notified by e-mail, and a list of all grant recipients will be posted on our website.

All grant recipients must comply with the ‘General Terms and Conditions’ when receiving a grant from the Novo Nordisk Foundation

NNF does not provide feedback in case an application is not selected for funding.

1.8 ASSESSMENT CRITERIA
All applications will be evaluated by the Novo Nordisk Foundation’s Committee on Bioscience and Basic Biomedicine. In the evaluation, the project and the applicant are weighted equally. The project is assessed based on quality, novelty, state-of-the-art and feasibility. The applicant is assessed on her/his merits relative to age and career stage, potential and the commitment to the applied project.

If you apply, while having active grants from NNF or other funders, you must state these grants in your CV including your time-commitment to them, and you should describe the synergy of the proposed project with the projects already funded. Failure to disclose active grant information and unrealistic time commitment to the proposed project will adversely affect the assessment.
2 THE APPLICATION AND GRANT MANAGEMENT SYSTEM – NORMA

This section provides the technical guidance for how to access and navigate in the application and grant management system 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 on REGISTER AS APPLICANT. You will be asked to fill in a contact form, which will appear in a new window. The main applicant should only have one user profile. Use your work e-mail address for registration. After the registration, you will receive an e-mail with your username and password. You can now log in to NORMA. When you log in for the first time, you will be asked to change your password.

Applicants who have previously applied for a grant from NNF or have an active grant may already have a user profile in NORMA. If you are in doubt, an existing user profile can be retrieved by clicking FORGOT PASSWORD and entering an e-mail address. If you have a user profile in the system, you will receive an e-mail with login information and a new password within 5–10 minutes.

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.

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

To initiate a new application, you first need to identify the call and grant you wish to apply for. In NORMA, go to the OPEN CALLS tab, which is located in the upper right corner of the screen. All currently available grants are visible in tabs that are sorted by NNF’s overall grant areas.

Initiate an application by clicking the blue APPLY NOW button. Your draft application is then created and will remain a draft version until you actively submit the application.

You can create and subsequently edit a draft version of the application until the deadline. A draft application can be saved by clicking SAVE DRAFT and may be cancelled at any time up to the deadline by clicking the button CANCEL APPLICATION. An application is not submitted to NNF until an applicant has clicked SUBMIT.
The application comprises tabbed sheets that need to be completed but not necessarily in chronological order. Fields marked with a red star (*) are obligatory to fill in.

You can review the application at any time by clicking OPEN under MY APPLICATIONS on the NORMA front page. The whole application, including any currently entered data, can be downloaded as a PDF file by clicking on APPLICATION PDF. Make sure the PDF is readable and formatted appropriately before submitting your application.

### 2.3 TEXT, ILLUSTRATIONS AND BUDGET

**FILLING IN THE FIELDS**

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.*

**APPLICATION TEXTS**

Text from Word, for example, can be copied and pasted into most text fields of the application. It is, however, important to check that formatting, special letters and symbols have not been converted or lost in the text fields after copying and pasting. If the formatting looks wrong in NORMA and in the PDF, you can try to change all text to “Normal” under the tab FORMAT.

The available functions for formatting text are at the top of the text fields. Some shorter text fields do not have the option to format.

*For readability purposes, standard fonts, font size 11-12, and line spacing between 1.0 and 1.5 must be used.*

**ILLUSTRATIONS**

Illustrations with figures, charts, tables, images etc. related to the project description can be uploaded under PROJECT INFORMATION (a maximum of four illustrations are allowed). Include the illustration number and a legend or caption for each illustration file when uploading. The illustrations will be integrated in the final application PDF.

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.

**BUDGET**

Before you begin to fill in the budget template, enter GRANT PERIOD START DATE and GRANT PERIOD END DATE under the PROJECT INFORMATION tab and press SAVE DRAFT. The budget must be entered in budget years following the grant period and not calendar years.

Complete the budget as follows:

- Click on the blue OPEN/EDIT icon to open a budget in a pop-up window.
- Click the + key to add budget rows.
• Select one of the budget headings, enter an amount under VALUE (DKK) and specify what the amount is for under DESCRIPTION.
• All amounts must be stated in Danish kroner (DKK) without decimal points, commas or spaces. NORMA automatically inserts the thousands separator.
• Save and close the budget spreadsheet by clicking SAVE and CLOSE (in that order) and then return to the BUDGET tab.

**Important**: If you make any changes to the grant period after filling out the budget, you must clear the budget table before making the change to the grant period.

### 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.

All applicants must read and accept NNF’s Standards for Good Research Practice before submitting the application. A link can be found under “Policies” in the top right corner of the window. 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. Fields in the application that are incorrectly completed or incomplete will be listed in a box at the top of the screen. Clicking on each individual line marked in red takes you directly to the incomplete field. The box will disappear when you select SAVE DRAFT. This allows you to continue with the application and submission.

A list of any incorrect or incomplete entries will be autogenerated when you click SUBMIT. Amending incorrect or incomplete entries can be time-consuming, so we recommend submitting applications well before the deadline.

If you wish to modify a submitted application before the deadline, it is possible to reopen the application. Be aware that the application must be resubmitted before the deadline. Applications cannot be modified after the submission deadline.

Once the application has been submitted, a confirmation of receipt will be sent to the e-mail address used for logging into the system. If you do not receive a confirmation of receipt (please check your spam folder), you should contact NNF as soon as possible using the contact details on page 3.

If you wish to withdraw a submitted application after the deadline, you must contact NNF via e-mail, using the contact information on page 3.

Please remember to check that the PDF version of the application is legible and contains all entered information and uploads before submitting the application.
3 APPLICATION CONTENT

This section aids with essential information to include, and best practice of how to apply for this specific call.

3.1 APPLICANT INFORMATION

Enter information on the main applicant and administrating institution in the following tabbed sheets:

- Personal information
- Current institution
- Educational information
- Administering institution
- Applicant information

MAIN APPLICANT

CV can be maximum 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.
- An overview of your current grants and indicate 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.

Publications list can be a maximum of 5,000 characters.

First, applicants should include a link to an updated profile with a full publication list for the applicant on either Google Scholar, Web of Science, or Scopus. Below state up to the 10 most relevant publications for evaluating your merits. Include a complete specification of all authors for each publication with your own name highlighted.

Supplementary Information (under Applicant Information):

- Describe your terms of employment (where the project is to be carried out). MSO Professors should state the timeline of their MSO Professorship.
- State how much of your research time (in %) you intend to commit to the project applied for.
- Applicants who do not fit the ‘Distinguished’ profile and/or are borderline concerning the eligibility requirements described, must describe here why they consider themselves Distinguished Investigators.
3.2 PROJECT INFORMATION

The following information must be included under the PROJECT INFORMATION tab:

GRANT PERIOD
After you enter the start and end dates for the grant, NORMA generates a grant period in whole years. The grant period for this call must be five years.

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 and primary methodologies and activities (maximum 2000 characters, including spaces).

PROJECT DESCRIPTION
Can be a maximum of 30,000 characters. Please describe your proposed research project in detail – including purpose, background, state-of-the-art, methods, implementation, collaborations, and the significance of the project. Please include a short paragraph of the synergy of the proposed project with project(s) already funded. Up to four illustrations can be uploaded to the project description and preliminary data is encouraged.

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

LITERATURE REFERENCES
Please provide the reference information for the literature cited in the project description (maximum 4000 characters, including spaces).

LAY PROJECT DESCRIPTION
Please provide a brief summary in English for non-experts in lay language of maximum 1,000 characters, that should be short and suitable for publishing on the Novo Nordisk Foundation website in case the project is funded.

Please note that the application should address all the assessment criteria listed in subsection 1.8.

3.3 BUDGET

Before you can fill in the budget template you must enter GRANT PERIOD START DATE and GRANT PERIOD END DATE under the PROJECT INFORMATION tab and press SAVE DRAFT.

The budget must be entered in budget years following the grant period and not calendar years.

Important: If you make any changes to the grant period after filling out the budget, you must clear the budget table before making the change to the grant period.

The total amount applied for should be up to DKK 10 million with approximately DKK 2 million per year. Annual budget amounts can diverge from DKK 2 million per year if needed (due to e.g. equipment costs).
Applicants may apply for funding for the following types of expenses:

- **Salary:** for research and technical assistance, including postdoctoral researchers, PhD students, technicians and research-year students. *Salary to cover employees can only be applied for if they are employed at a lower job structure/salary level than the grant recipient.*

- **Tuition fee:** for PhD students (up to DKK 80,000 per budget year) - must be specified separately in the budget.

- **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:** Up to DKK 50,000 per budget year can be requested for travel and registration expenses in relation to presenting the project at conferences and workshops, or for the applicant’s participation in leadership courses or workshops (e.g. EMBO lab leadership courses).

- **Travel:** travel expenses directly related to the project, i.e. experiments carried out in other labs for a limited period.

- **Publication costs:** of results emanating from the research project (up to DKK 25,000 per budget year).

- **Bench fee:** To include a bench fee in the budget, the fee must be part of the general expenses policy of the institute/institution. Further, if bench fee is included in the budget applied for, it must be elaborated in the budget what exactly it covers, and it may only be used for lab consumables and access to lab space and facilities that cannot be included within ‘operating expenses’ or another budget category.

- **Direct administrative expenses:** (up to 5% of the funding applied for):
  - can cover non-scientific, administrative expenses in relation to the project, such as accounting, administration related to payment of salaries and purchasing, hiring, as well as auditing and financial reporting on the project
  - cannot cover administrative expenses that are not directly related to the project
  - 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 Novo Nordisk Foundation does not allow double funding of projects.

- If the applicant has received funding for the project or parts of the project, this must be included in the budget and there can be no budgetary overlaps.
- If an identical or overlapping project proposal has been submitted to other funding institutions than the Novo Nordisk Foundation, it should be noted in the ‘supplementary information’ under the budget tab, and the overlapping budget posts should be specified.
- If the applicant, post application submission, receives funding for the project or parts of the applied project from others, the Novo Nordisk Foundation must be contacted as soon as possible.

Justification, explanation and comments to the budget can be entered in the SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION field. It is important that the requested funds are justified, well described and aligns with the described project.

Funding received for the applied project from the applicant’s own organisation and/or 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. It must be clearly described in the INFORMATION FOR ADDITIONAL CONTRIBUTIONS field what the additional contributions cover, and co-financing from the host institution is not an evaluation criterion.
3.4 PREVIOUS AND CURRENT GRANTS FROM THE FOUNDATION
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 the synergy of the project proposed in the current application to these grants.

If you have submitted other applications to NNF you must list them in the bottom table ONLY if they are still under review and thus a granting decision has not yet been made.

3.5 UPLOADS
A hosting letter from the administration institution, signed by the head of the institute, must be included. *Please do not include other appendices.*

Uploads must be in PDF format. NORMA automatically places these uploads at the end of the application.

October 2020
The Novo Nordisk Foundation

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.