



DATA SCIENCE ASCENDING INVESTIGATOR 2022

Information and guidelines for
applicants

Science
Investigator
2022

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Information about the call

Grant capital:
DKK 70 million

Award amount
DKK 5-10 million per grant

Application form opens:
December 2021

Application deadline:
8 March 2022, 14:00 CET

Applicant notification:
September 2022

Earliest start date:
November 2022

Latest start date:
October 2023

Review committee:
Committee for Data Science

Contact:
Signe Rømer Holm
Grant Manager
Phone: +45 7242 2561

Morten Bache
Senior Scientific Lead
Phone: +45 7730 1560

Ulrik Nicolai de Lichtenberg
Senior Scientific Manager
Phone: +45 3527 6520

E-mail: datascience@novo.dk

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1 DATA SCIENCE ASCENDING INVESTIGATOR 2022

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, eligibility criteria, and evaluation process.
- **Section 2** provides technical guidance for how to access and navigate in the application and grant management system NORMA.
- **Section 3** gives essential information regarding the application content, structure, and budget.

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.

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 purpose of the '**Data Science Ascending Investigator**' grant is to support excellent and independent Associate Professors (or equivalent) with ambitious projects within data science. The programme is part of the NNF Data Science Initiative, through which the Foundation aims to strengthen the Danish academic research environment within data science and artificial intelligence, as well as support the education and training of the next generation of data scientists.

Open competition calls in the Novo Nordisk Foundation's Data Science Initiative

- **The Data Science Investigator Programme** supports excellent independent research leaders with ambitious projects within the field of data science.
- **The Data Science Collaborative Research Programme** supports data science-driven collaborative research projects within the Foundation's scientific focus areas.
- **The Data Science Research Infrastructure Programme** supports investment in shared supercomputers, hardware, staff positions, data collection, curation, and management.
- **The Danish Data Science Academy** promotes collaboration, education, and awarding of travel grants and PhD and postdoc fellowships (calls are announced at <https://ddsa.dk>).

THE RESEARCH LEADER PROGRAMME

To support the best and the most talented research leaders at all career steps, from senior postdocs wanting to start their own independent research group to established senior principal investigators, the Data Science Investigator Programme offers three different calls under the NNF Research Leader Programme.

Each of the three calls - 'Emerging', 'Ascending', and 'Distinguished' - targets principal investigators at a specific career stage, and applicants are encouraged to familiarise themselves with the requirements in each category, to ensure that they are eligible and apply for the appropriate call.

To allow the grant recipients the freedom and security to pursue original and ambitious ideas, the grants are for five years.

THE 'ASCENDING INVESTIGATOR' PROFILE

The 'Data Science Ascending Investigator' grant is for excellent and established research group leaders within the field of data science at the level of associate professors (or equivalent), who have the ambition and potential to rise to the highest international level within their research field. Applications from assistant professors, or researchers in similar research positions, will be considered if the application meets all the other requirements in this call. See section 1.3 for further details.

Starting group leaders are encouraged to compare the eligibility criteria of this call with that of the 'Emerging' profile to select the best fit. Professors (including MSO) cannot apply as 'Ascending' Investigators, since they are considered 'Distinguished' Investigators under this programme.

1.2 AREAS OF SUPPORT

The proposed research must fall within the scope of the NNF Data Science Initiative, which aims to support the following key science areas:

- Development of new algorithms, methods, and technologies within data science, artificial intelligence (incl. machine learning and deep learning), data engineering, data mining, statistics, applied math, computer science, big data analytics, etc.
- Applications of data science (as defined above) within NNF's scientific focus areas (see box below): Biomedical and health science, life science and industrial applications promoting sustainability, as well as natural and technical sciences with potential application in biotechnology or biomedicine.

For projects mainly concerned with data science methods development, it is important that the applicants clearly show the relevance for potential future application and impact within life science, health science, or biotechnology. Vice versa, projects which have their primary focus on application of data science methods must describe and explain the novelty and impact of their data science approach, be it development of novel methods or novel applications of existing methods.

In general, projects without potential future applications within the NNF's scientific focus areas and projects with no novelty in terms of development or application of data science methods will not be funded in this programme.

Projects where the primary focus is on financial or insurance data, fraud detection, advertisement, social media, social science or humanities, security and mass surveillance, defence, gaming, etc. are considered outside of scope and will not be considered for funding.

The Novo Nordisk Foundation's scientific focus areas

Biomedical and Health Sciences supports basic research in biomedicine that paves the way for advances in translational medicine and innovative clinical applications. Among the key topics are: basic biomedical research, translational biomedical research and technologies, clinical research, health-related data science infrastructure and applications, and research in patient-centred healthcare and treatment systems.

Life Science and Industrial Applications Promoting Sustainability addresses the escalating global sustainability challenges and the potential to make a positive impact for the environment. The research areas that are supported are within industrial biotechnology and environmental biotechnology, plant science, agriculture and food biotechnology as well as ecosystems research related to these areas. Basic research, platforms, and technologies enabling research on sustainability are included.

Natural and Technical Sciences supports fundamental research within the natural and technical sciences, including, e.g., physics, chemistry, mathematics, data science, and technical sciences. The research must have potential interdisciplinary application in biomedicine, health sciences, or biotechnology; this application need not be in the project period but could be beyond. Focus areas include interdisciplinary research, quantum technologies with potential application in the life sciences, data science, and health- and med-tech.

1.3 ELIGIBILITY

The following criteria apply to the Ascending Investigator grants.

CAREER STAGE

The 'Data Science Ascending Investigator' grant is aimed at supporting excellent and independent research group leaders at the level of associate professor (or equivalent) or possibly senior assistant professor, who have the ambition and potential to rise to the highest international level within their research field. Ideally, after their PhD degree, applicants should have approximately 7-15 years of subsequent research experience (parental leave excluded), but the PhD age requirement is revocable, pending the assessment of the individual candidate.

Applicants should have their own established research group and individual research profile. Applicants are expected to have a documented track record of high-impact scientific contributions to the field of data science (relative to their career stage), which will typically include first authorship of research papers in high-impact journals, contributions to key conferences in the field, etc. They must, at the time of application, also have senior authorships.

Applicants employed in a professor position (including MSO) must apply for the Data Science Distinguished Investigator call.

PROJECT LEADERSHIP

Ascending Investigator grants are individual grants awarded to excellent established research group leaders with original and ambitious projects, to support them in rising to the highest international level within their research field. The applicant must be the principal investigator of the proposed project and should thus, during the project, act independently from other (more senior) researchers at the host institution.

The grant is at the disposal of the grant recipient. If the project involves collaboration with other groups or independent investigators, the applicant must clearly demonstrate his or her ownership of the proposed project. The nature of the collaboration, including roles and responsibilities, should be well described in the application. Please note that invitation and funding of co-applicants is not possible within this call.

THE GRANT IS ONLY FOR DATA SCIENTISTS

The applicant must be an active data science researcher who conducts and directs independent research as well as educational and training activities, within the field of data science.

Non-data scientists (e.g., wet lab biologists, medical doctors, chemists, etc.) who merely employ or collaborate with data scientists are not eligible to apply for this grant.

No specific educational background is required but the typical applicant would likely be trained in computer science, mathematics, physics, statistics, bioinformatics, or other informatics-heavy disciplines. If the data science competences of an applicant are not evident directly from the educational background, publication list, employment, or similar, we recommend clarifying in the application how and why the candidate is competent within the field, and hence eligible to apply for the grant.

INSTITUTIONAL ANCHORING

The project applied for must be anchored at a university or other non-profit research institution in Denmark. This host institution administrates the grant.

A hosting letter signed by the head of the department must be included in the application (see section 3.5 for details).

Applicants must, during the project, be employed in Denmark and have their research group based in Denmark. Only minor and time-limited affiliations with institutions abroad are allowed, as the grant is intended for 'full-time' researchers (teaching obligations included) based in Denmark.

CONTRIBUTION TO TEACHING

Grant recipients must actively direct or contribute to educational or training courses in data science at their host institution and/or at other institutions in Denmark. The grant must not be used to cover a teaching substitute for the applicant.

IMPORTANT RESTRICTIONS

- 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. ‘Investigator grants’ include the following calls/grants across all funding areas: Emerging Investigator, Ascending Investigator, Distinguished Investigator, NNF Young Investigator Award, NNF Laureate Research Grant, Distinguished Innovator, and NERD.
- If an applicant holds an active ‘Investigator’ grant, the applicant may apply for a new grant during the final year of the existing grant. However, the grant periods cannot overlap.

1.4 FUNDING

Each Investigator grant can be DKK 5-10 million over 5 years.

The total 2022 grant budget for Data Science Investigators across all three career stages (emerging, ascending, and distinguished investigators) is up to DKK 70 million, distributed across all three career stages.

Applicants may apply for funding for the following types of expenses (see section 3.4 for details):

- In exceptional cases salary for the applicant, however, note restrictions in section 3.4
- Salary for employees
- Tuition fee for PhD students
- Operating expenses
- Data management
- Equipment
- Conference participation
- Travel
- Publication costs
- Bench fee
- Direct administrative expenses (up to 5% of the total funding applied for)



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

NNF does not award funding for:

- Commercial activities
- Overhead
- Double funding of projects:
 - If the applicant has received funding for the proposed project from other sources, in part or in full, this situation 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 NNF, it must be noted in the application.
- If the applicant, post application submission, receives funding for the project or parts of the applied project from others, the NNF must be contacted immediately.

Applying for a Data Science Investigator grant does not block the applicant from also applying (as either a main or co-applicant) for funding via the two other programmes under the NNF Data Science Initiative (Data Science Collaborative Research and Data Science Research Infrastructure); however:

- The applicant must indicate which other submitted proposals includes her/him as a main or co-applicant.
- The different applications should not be contingent on each other.
- Applying with the same project to more than one call is not allowed. Any overlap in project content between submitted applications should be clearly indicated and explained.

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>. Further information on how to access and navigate in NORMA can be found in chapter 2.



When all applications have been assessed, applicants will be notified about the result in an e-mail from 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

The NNF's Committee for Data Science, which consist of international experts within the field, will be responsible for the scientific evaluation and prioritisation of the applications.

The following elements will be part of the assessment:

- The quality, novelty, and feasibility of the project as well as the merits, independence, maturity, commitment, and potential of the applicant. Project and applicant will be weighted equally.
- The performance of the applicant will be evaluated relative to the career stage and age.
- The applicant's level of mobility and international experience.
- The academic independence and research leadership potential of the applicant.
- The applicant's plan to actively contribute to and direct educational or training courses in data science.

The following elements will not be given weight:

- The current funding situation of the applicant will not affect the evaluation of the proposal per se. However, the level of commitment of the candidate to the project can be taken into consideration by the committee, for instance, if the applicant has existing major obligations or large grants.
- Whether the applicant applies for funding for his/her own salary, or has own salary covered by host institution or other funding, will be irrelevant for the evaluation. However, note restrictions regarding applicant salary in section 3.4.

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 the active grant(s) before submission of a new application to NNF. If you apply while having an active grant from NNF, 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

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 user name 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.



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 are 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.

3.1 APPLICANT

The **APPLICANT**-tab contains information about all those involved with an application, meaning the main applicant or the contact person applying on behalf of an organization/institution as well as any co-applicants. Information about each applicant is collected through individual tasks in the **APPLICANT DETAILS**-section, detailing experience, publication history, application history with NNF, etc.

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.

In addition to a CV, please include in the **CV** section:

- A short bibliographic overview summarising total number of peer-reviewed publications, number of first authorships, number of corresponding authorships, number of citations, H-index, etc.
- An overview of your current grants with indication of how much of your research time (in %) is committed to each of the projects.
- A short paragraph on your teaching experience and current obligations. In the project description, you must provide a clear plan for how the collaboration will actively direct or participate in educational or training courses in data science in Denmark during the project period (see section 3.3).

Please include in the **Publications** section:

- A link to an updated profile with a full publication list on, e.g., ORCID, Google Scholar, Web of Science, or Scopus.
- A list of the 10 most relevant publications (or conference contributions) for evaluating your merits. Kindly include a complete specification of all authors for each publication.

Please include in the **Summary of own research** section an outline of your research focus and main contributions and achievements relevant for the present application.

Please include in the **Supplementary Information** section:

- A description of your terms of employment (where the project is to be carried out). Non-permanent employees must indicate when their current contracts are running out and how their salaries are currently covered. Tenure-track employees should indicate when they are up for tenure (time-unlimited employment).
- An indication how much of your research time (in %) you intend to commit to the project applied for.
- Applicants who do not fit the 'Ascending' profile and/or are borderline concerning the eligibility requirements described, must describe here why they consider themselves Ascending Investigators.

3.2 INSTITUTION

Please provide information about the institution where the grant will be administrated. 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 administrating 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 administrating 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, Lay project description, and Research methods) will have a short instruction text describing the expected input and maximum characters available.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The full project description can be a maximum of 30,000 characters (including spaces, line breaks, and special characters).

Please describe your proposed research project in detail – including **purpose, background, current state-of-the-art, methods, implementation, collaborations**, and the **novelty and significance** of the project, including its contribution to moving data science forward in Denmark.

It is **particularly important to clearly describe data methods development and data science applications** part of your project, putting this in relation to the current state-of-the-art and describing how your project will bring **novelty** in terms of development of new data science methods or new impactful applications of established methods. Furthermore, it should be clear how the project gains **access to the necessary data**.

Please also include short paragraphs clearly describing:

- The potential future applications and impact of your research project within the NNF's scientific focus areas (see section 1.2).

- Teaching: How you plan to actively direct or participate in educational or training courses in data science in Denmark during the project period.
- Synergy of the proposed project with any other projects for which you have already obtained funding.

Up to four illustrations can be uploaded to the project description. 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.



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

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.

ELIGIBLE COSTS

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

- **Salary for the applicant** for all or part of the project period. Salary for the applicant cannot be covered if the applicant is in a time-unlimited position. In exceptional cases, where the

applicant is contractually obligated to undertake specific commitments that are not compatible with the proposed research project, the applicant may apply for a part of his/her salary. Salary at professor level cannot be awarded with this grant.

- **Salary for employees**, e.g., research and technical assistance, including postdoctoral researchers, PhD students and technicians. Salary expenses cannot cover employees of similar or higher academic employment level than the applicant.
- **PhD tuition fee** up to DKK 80,000 per student per budget year (must be specified separately).
- **Operating expenses**, e.g., lab consumables, chemicals and reagents, research animals, sequencing/proteomics, computing resources, data storage, and analysis services.
- **Data management** expenses for collecting and storing data.
- **Equipment**, e.g., hardware, software, data access, etc. (maximum 20% of the budget total).
- **Conference participation** related expenses in connection with presenting the project at conferences and workshops.
- **Travel** expenses, e.g., experiments or analyses carried out in other labs for a limited period.
- **Publication costs** of results emanating from the project
- **Bench fees** 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 Hosting Letter from the administrating institution (see section 3.5). An unspecified bench fee without documentation will not be accepted. Maximum DKK 8,000 per month per FTE working on the project is acceptable for this post.

- **Administrative support** can be applied for but 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 which 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.

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



Applicants may only apply for the types of expenses listed in section 1.4 and 3.4.

3.5 APPENDICES

A hosting letter from the administration institution signed by the head of the department must be included. The letter should confirm that the project will take place at the institution, and that the institution will provide the required infrastructure, such as laboratory and office space, and administration of the grant. If bench fee is included in the budget, the hosting letter should document that the administrating institution has a general bench fee policy (see section 3.4).

Uploads must be in PDF format. Please do not include other appendices.

December 2021

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.