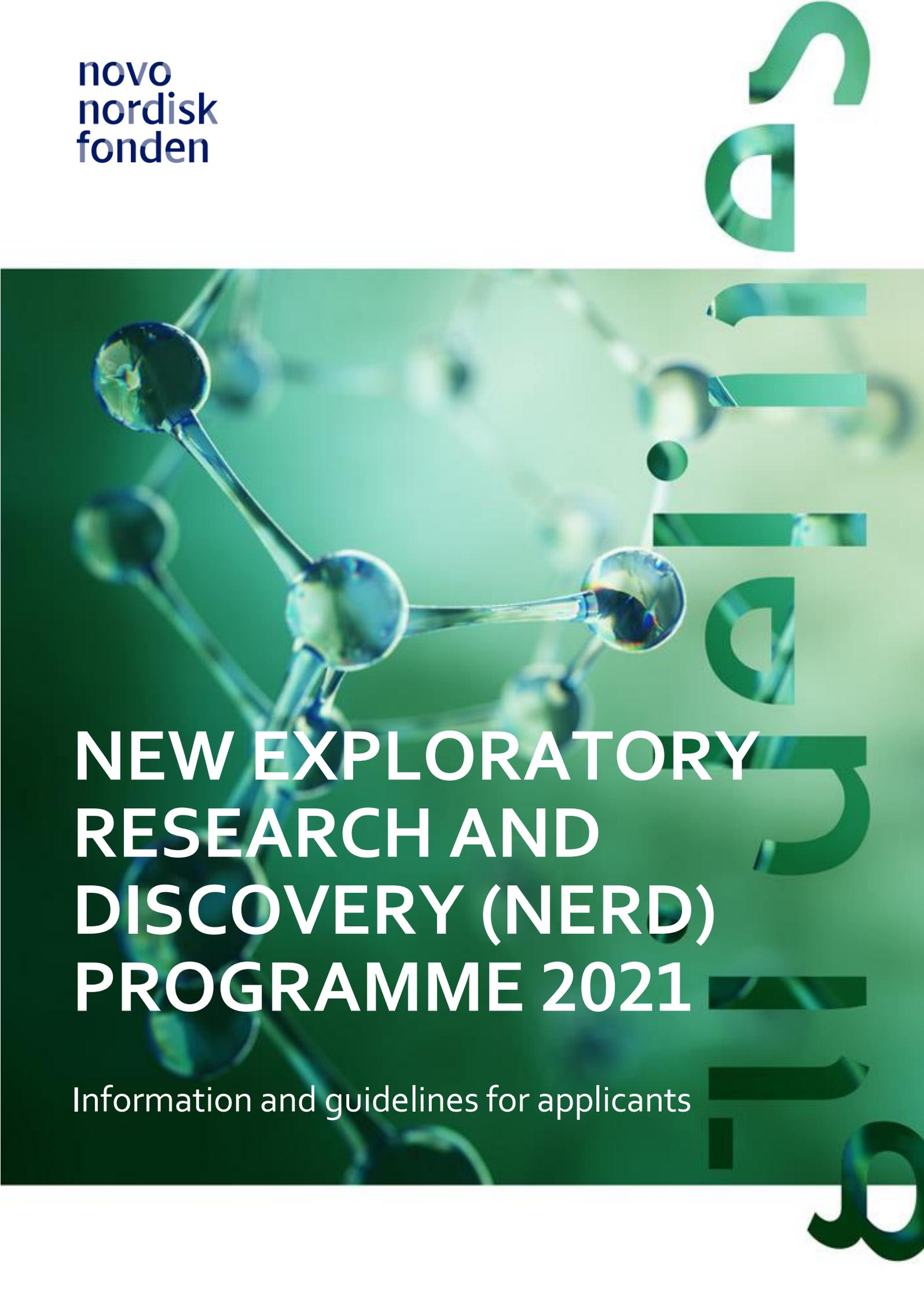


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NEW EXPLORATORY RESEARCH AND DISCOVERY (NERD) PROGRAMME 2021

Information and guidelines for applicants

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Information about the call

Grant capital for 2021:
DKK 98 million

Award amount:
Up to DKK 14 million per grant for experimental projects
Up to DKK 10.5 million per grant for theoretical projects

Application form opens:
20 October 2020

Application deadline:
28 January 2021, 2 pm CET

Applicant notification:
June 2021

Earliest start date:
1 August 2021

Latest start date:
1 February 2022

Review committee:
Committee for the Natural and Technical Sciences

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1 NERD PROGRAMME 2021

Please read these guidelines carefully before initiating the application process for the NERD programme 2021, as they 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.

All applicant and application information will be treated confidentially.

1.1 PURPOSE

The purpose of the NERD programme is to support creative, daring, and ambitious researchers within the natural and technical sciences, at any career stage after obtaining the PhD degree. A NERD grant is aimed at supporting a single principle investigator (PI) with ample funding and a long time-horizon, providing the required long-term stability and continuity to explore truly exceptional ideas with potential application within the life sciences, health sciences, or biotechnology.

The NERD programme uses a two-stage evaluation procedure. At the first stage, applicants will remain anonymous to the evaluation committee, ensuring that emphasis is put on the suggested scientific ideas. The top evaluated applications will proceed to the second stage, where the CVs and publication lists of the applicants will be included to assess the feasibility of the proposed projects.

To ensure that the PI will dedicate time and effort to the proposed research, during the year of commencing the NERD project, the applicant cannot have a grant portfolio as PI exceeding an annual total of DKK 4 million (including possible overhead). Grants where the applicant is co-PI are not included in this total.

1.2 AREAS OF SUPPORT

Eligible fields of research

The overall goal of the NERD programme is to support fundamental research within the natural and technical sciences, including, e.g., physics, chemistry, mathematics, computer science, and technical sciences.

In alignment with the overall vision and strategy of the Novo Nordisk Foundation, **applications for the NERD programme must explicitly describe how the outcome of the project may have potential future applications in the life sciences, health sciences, or in biotechnology.** Such potential applications may be within the project period but could also be on timescales longer than the project period.

Ineligible fields of research

Projects focused on areas covered by other calls from the Novo Nordisk Foundation, or which fall outside the current scope of the Foundation, are not eligible for the NERD programme. Examples of research areas not eligible for the NERD programme are:

- Bioscience and biomedicine
- Endocrinology and metabolism

- Industrial and environmental biotechnology
- Plant science, agriculture and food biotechnology
- Clinical and translational medicine
- Cosmology
- Zoology
- Projects that are primarily retrospective or primarily of historical value

The list is not exhaustive. Applicants are welcome to contact the Foundation with questions regarding eligible areas of support for the NERD programme.

1.3 ELIGIBILITY

Researchers at any career stage after obtaining the PhD are eligible to apply. Examples include independent researchers who have already established their own line of research, or researchers who are in the process of establishing themselves as independent researchers. Applications from PhD students will not be taken into consideration.

Other important criteria:

- The research project must be anchored at a university or other non-profit research institution in Denmark.
- The applicant must be at least 80% affiliated with a university or other non-profit research institution in Denmark
- The following signed documentation must be provided:
 - A hosting letter signed by the head of department. The letter should confirm that the institution will provide the required infrastructure, laboratory and office facilities, as well as administration of the grant.
 - Confirmation that the applicant does not have a grant portfolio exceeding an annual total of DKK 4.0 million (including possible overhead) in the year of commencing the project. This statement can be included in the hosting letter or in a separate document, signed by the head of administration or the chief accountant at the host institution.
- A NERD grant cannot be used to cover a teaching substitute for the applicant.
- NERD grants are individual grants at the disposal of the grant recipient. If the applied project involves collaboration, the nature of the collaboration should be described in the project description, however, the grant recipient must be the clear driver of the project. Invitation of co-applicants is not possible in this call.
- The NERD programme is intended for 'full-time' researchers (teaching obligations included).

Important restrictions regarding NNF grants and proposals:

- Applicants may submit only one application for a grant of the NERD or NNF Investigator types (across all funding areas) per calendar year, including the annually reoccurring Data Science Investigator calls under the Foundation's Data Science Initiative, running in 2020-2022. If an applicant submits more than one application to these calls, only the first application submitted will be evaluated, while the subsequent applications will receive administrative rejections.
- If an applicant holds an active NERD or 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

The timeframe of a NERD project is up to 7 years. Projects with a duration of less than 5 years will not be taken into consideration.

The total grant size is up to DKK 10.5 million for a 7-year period (pro rata for shorter projects). If the activities are primarily of an experimental nature, an additional DKK 3.5 million can be requested, for a total of up to DKK 14 million in funding for a 7-year project period (pro rata for shorter projects).

Applicants may apply for funding for the following overall types of expenses when directly related to the project (see section 3.3 for details on conditions and requirements):

- Salary for the applicant
- Salary for employees
- PhD tuition fee
- Operating expenses
- Equipment
- Conference participation
- Travel
- Publication costs
- Bench fee
- Direct administrative expenses

NNF will 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 Novo Nordisk Foundation, 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 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.)

1.5 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 whether or not they have been awarded a grant. The notification e-mail will be sent from noreply@norma.novonordiskfonden.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 Natural and Technical Sciences evaluates the applications.

The NERD Programme will use a two-stage evaluation process. A full application is required already at the first stage.

At the first stage, in order to put emphasis on the proposed scientific project, the committee will only have access to the submitted project description. At the second stage, the top applications from stage one with the highest scores are selected for further review. At the second stage, the committee will also consider the CV and publication list of each applicant to assess the feasibility of the proposed project.

Applicants must take care to formulate and structure their project information so that it does not in any way reveal their identity (see section 3.2 for details). Applications in which the applicant's identity is intentionally revealed in the project description, will not be taken into consideration.

The committee will include in their assessment the scientific quality, creativity, novelty, ambition, and feasibility of the project. Furthermore, the dedication (in time) of the applicant may be taken into consideration when evaluating the project.

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 important information specific to the present call and application content. All the fields of the application form must be completed in accordance with these guidelines and the instructions in NORMA.

All applicant and application information will be treated confidentially. Read more about how NNF processes personal data under 'privacy & security' 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 on REGISTER AS [APPLICANT/ORGANISATIONAL 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. An existing user profile can be retrieved by clicking FORGOT PASSWORD and entering an e-mail address.

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 AND ILLUSTRATIONS

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.

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 provides guidelines on the content required in the sections of the online application form for this call, as well as essential information regarding the project description, structure, and budget.

3.1 APPLICANT INFORMATION

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

- Personal information
- Current institution
- Educational information
- Administrating institution
- Applicant information
 - CV can be maximum 4,000 characters, including spaces, and must include a short bibliographic overview summarising total number of peer-reviewed publications, number of citations, and h-index.
 - Publication list can be maximum 5,000 characters, including spaces, and must include the 10 most relevant publications. Applicants are strongly encouraged to provide a full list of publications in ORCID.
 - Supplementary information can be maximum 2,000 characters, including spaces, and should:
 - Describe your terms of employment: Where the project is carried out; None-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.
 - Provide an overview of your current active grants and other grants obtained within the past five years.
 - Indicate how much of your research time (in %) is committed to each of the projects already funded and indicate how much of your research time (in %) you intend to commit to the project applied for.



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.

3.2 PROJECT INFORMATION

Enter a description of the project under the PROJECT INFORMATION tab.

The information and uploads given in this tab are the only parts of the application that the evaluation committee will be given access to during the first, blinded stage of the evaluation procedure. You must formulate and structure your project information carefully to remain anonymous, including carefully considering references and self-citations, and refraining from uploading material that may reveal your identity.

GRANT PERIOD

After you enter the start and end dates for the grant, NORMA generates a grant period in whole years. The grant period is the duration of NNF's grant for the project.

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 2,000 characters, including spaces).

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Please provide a detailed description of the proposed research project (maximum 30,000 characters, including spaces). The description should include purpose, background, methods, as well as the creativity, ambition, and originality of the project.

The project description must contain a paragraph describing how the outcome of the proposed research may have potential future applications, possibly in the long term, in the life sciences, health sciences, or biotechnology.

A maximum of four illustrations can be uploaded as part of the project description.

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 4,000 characters, including spaces).

LAY PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Please provide a brief summary for non-experts in lay language (English). If the application is awarded a grant, the text may be used for publication (maximum 1,000 characters, including spaces).



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

3.3 BUDGET

The budget only comprises the information entered in the BUDGET tab. Additional budget information attached under UPLOADS or added under other tabs than BUDGET will not be considered.

The way in which the budget is set up influences any later financial reporting to NNF. Please note that any later financial accounts must have the same headings as the budget posts in the original application.

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.

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. This expense is applicable below professor level and only if the applicant is not tenured or otherwise not guaranteed a salary during the project period.
- **Salary for employees**, e.g., 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 budget year (must be included separately).
- **Operating expenses**, e.g., materials, consumables, and purchase of services.
- **Equipment** required for the project. Equipment above DKK 100,000 must be located at the host institution for the duration and following the termination of the project.
- **Conferences**.
- **Travel** expenses for, e.g., conferences, meetings, or experiments carried out at other laboratories.
- **Publication** costs.
- **Bench fee**. Fees must be specified in the budget and may only be used for operating expenses, lab consumables, and access to laboratory space and facilities that cannot be included within another individual budget category. To include a bench fee in the budget, the fee must be part of the general expenses policy of the institute/institution and apply to all employees for which the policy concerns.
- **Administrative support** of up to 5% of the total budget (must be included separately):
 - can cover expenses such as 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.
 - 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.

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. The INFORMATION FOR ADDITIONAL CONTRIBUTIONS field must clearly describe what the additional contributions cover and how the project proposed in this application is different from the project already funded or applied for from other parties than NNF. If the applicant, after submitting the application, receives funding for the project or parts of the applied project from others, the NNF must be contacted as soon as possible.



Applicants may only apply for the types of expenses listed in subsection 1.4 and 3.3.

3.4 UPLOADS

Mandatory uploads:

- A hosting letter signed by the department head at the administrating institution, confirming that the project can take place at the host institution, which will provide the required infrastructure, such as laboratory and office facilities, and administration of the grant.
- A confirmation from the host institution that the applicant does not have a grant portfolio exceeding an annual total of DKK 4 million (including possible overhead) in the year of commencing the project. This confirmation can be included in the hosting letter or uploaded in a separate statement (under the hosting letter tab), signed by the head of administration or the chief accountant at the host institution.

All uploads must be in PDF format. NORMA automatically places these uploads at the end of the application. Please respect the page limitation and the upload requirements stated in the call. Uploads in excess of these limits may not be considered for evaluation.

3.5 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 summarise how any of the grants are related to the current application.

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