



LEO FOUNDATION

LEO Foundation Dr Abildgaard Fellowships

Information and guidelines for applicants

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Information about the call

Grant amount: DKK 12 million over 5 years

Call opens: 18 December 2025

Call deadline: 19 March 2026 16:00 CET

Interviews with invited candidates: 12 August 2026

Applicant notification: September 2026

Earliest start date: 01 January 2027

Latest start date: 01 January 2028

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Further information:

<https://leo-foundation.org/en/grants-and-awards/dr-abildgaard-fellowships/>

1 LEO Foundation Dr Abildgaard Fellowships

1.1 Purpose

The purpose of the LEO Foundation Dr Abildgaard Fellowships program is to support promising emerging research leaders in establishing or expanding an independent research group while pursuing novel and important research questions within skin and skin diseases.

The proposed research activities should be ambitious, creative, and hold a potential for high impact. The aim is to offer stable funding over a five-year period to allow the Fellow the freedom to adjust the scientific course as needed during the grant period and thus establish a clear and competitive research profile.

1.2 Supported areas of research

The proposed skin research activities can be of a basic, translational, epidemiological, and/or clinical nature.

The LEO Foundation welcomes applications that aim to, e.g.:

- Improve the understanding of skin biology, as well as the underlying medicinal, biological, chemical, or pharmacological mechanisms of skin diseases and their symptoms.
- Address clinical issues among people who are at risk of developing, or have developed, a skin disease, including how it impacts their quality of life, and the societal costs involved.
- Develop novel and improved methodologies and technologies for diagnostics, disease prevention, and treatments, including personalized medicine, for people with skin diseases.
- Integrate elements of complementary research fields, e.g., data science, to enable a more comprehensive approach to skin science.

The LEO Foundation only supports investigator-initiated clinical trials, i.e., the applicant has conceived the proposed research project and will conduct and publish the involved trial or study independent of commercial interests.

The LEO Foundation does not support research into aesthetic/cosmetic dermatology, i.e., the subspecialty in dermatology where the aims are to improve the appearance of the skin by attempting to correct or delay skin aging, attenuate physical defects, or simply improve the person's appearance. Treatment of moderate to severe late sequels of dermatological disease is not considered cosmetic dermatology.

Applicants are welcome to contact the LEO Foundation with questions regarding supported areas of research.

1.3 Eligibility

Applicants must be full-time employed at a Danish university, hospital, or other non-profit research institution during the grant period. Only minor or temporary affiliations with other institutions are

allowed, and the necessity and synergy effects for the proposed Fellowship project should be argued in the application.

Different eligibility criteria apply for different types of applicants:

- **Applicants within basic science** must have between two and eight years of research experience since completing their PhD degree (calculated at the application deadline), i.e., be at the career stage of senior postdoc, assistant professor, or a recently appointed associate professor/senior researcher.
- **Applicants within clinical science** must be MDs, must have between two and eight years of research experience since completing their PhD degree (calculated at the application deadline), and must be able to commit 20-50% of their time to research. The research commitment may vary over the course of the grant period for applicants who are also under medical specialist training but should always be sufficient to be a present and active group leader/supervisor and cannot be less than 20% on average.

Any leave of absence taken after obtaining the PhD degree due to parental/sick/care leave may be deducted from the PhD seniority if start and end dates and total number of weeks are indicated in the proposal and CV. Specifically for parental leave, applicants who have taken maternity or paternity leave can deduct the actual number of weeks of leave multiplied by 2.0. For other types of leave, the actual number of weeks of leave can be deducted.

Important notes:

- Applicants may not already hold or, as a rule, within one year of being awarded the LEO Foundation Dr Abildgaard Fellowship, accept a Danish or international starting grant (e.g., ERC Starting Grant, Novo Nordisk Foundation Hallas-Møller Investigator Grant or Clinical Investigator Grant, Lundbeck Foundation Fellows, Carlsberg Foundation Semper Ardens grant, or similar). If an applicant has submitted or is in the process of preparing a proposal for another starting grant call, this should be mentioned in the application to the LEO Foundation.
- Applicants may submit only one application for the present call.
- An application can only have one main applicant and one host organization to which all funding will be paid out. If an application involves collaboration(s) which require redistribution of funds, such redistribution and related reporting is the responsibility of the main applicant and host institution.
- A LEO Foundation Dr Abildgaard Fellowship grantee cannot apply for the LEO Foundation's program Research Grants in Open Competition until the last year of the grant period of the Fellowship grant, and any such new grant awarded by the Foundation cannot be initiated until the Fellowship grant has ended. Other programs offered by the Foundation may be applied for.

Applicants who are not affiliated with a Danish research institution at the time of submitting their proposal must have a clear agreement with a Danish research institution which is committed to hosting the grantee and research activities throughout the grant period (see the Appendices section concerning support letter). It is expected that grantees have established their group at the receiving institution within one year of being awarded a Fellowship.

A LEO Foundation Dr Abildgaard Fellowship is a defining, individual grant at the disposal of the Fellow. Collaborations are encouraged; however, the applicant must be the clear driver of the research activities, and the merits of collaborators will not be included in the evaluation of the proposal.

2 Application and evaluation process

The evaluation process is carried out in two steps:

- **Step 1:** An international expert panel of external reviewers will assess the submitted applications.
- **Step 2:** Top-ranked applicants are invited for an interview with the LEO Foundation [Grant Committee](#) on 12 August 2026.

Based on the application and the interview with the applicant, the Committee makes a recommendation to the LEO Foundation Board of Trustees concerning which applicants to award a LEO Foundation Dr Abildgaard Fellowship.

2.1 Evaluation criteria

The proposed research and the applicants are weighed equally in the evaluation.

The proposed research is evaluated based on quality, novelty, potential impact on skin health, and feasibility.

The applicant is evaluated based on scientific merits relative to PhD-age and career stage, creativity, potential as research leader, and level of experience within independent research activities.

Furthermore, the hosting research environment is considered, including the synergies between the applicant and the host institution, and the commitment of the host institution as stated in the Letter of support and Letter of intent included in the application.

2.2 Application content

The application, including appendices, must be written in English. The research proposal is presented in the following sections:

- **Scientific abstract** (maximum 1,500 characters including spaces): Please provide a short abstract of your proposal aimed at scientists that may work outside your field of expertise. This will be used by the LEO Foundation and its external peer reviewers in the evaluation process. Structure it according to the following headers: Vision; Plan; Impact.
- **Purpose and state-of-the-art** (maximum 5,000 characters including spaces): Please describe the vision and the key aims of your research activities, provide information on current state-of-the-art and other relevant background information, describe your hypotheses, the novelty of your proposal, etc.
- **Research activities** (maximum 15,000 characters including spaces): Please describe your research approach and main activities, including methodologies, overall prioritization of

resources, plan for collaborations and inclusion of external areas of expertise, implementation, mitigation plans for key risks, etc.

- **Significance and impact** (maximum 3,000 characters including spaces): Please describe the relevance and potential short- and long-term impact of your research activities, including their contribution to current state-of-the-art in the research field and to skin health or treatment of skin diseases.
- **Research leadership and environment** (maximum 3,000 characters including spaces): Please describe your vision for your research leadership and the community that you will be part of, e.g., your role as a group leader; the local research environment and your integration into it, including teaching activities, synergies, and relevant infrastructure facilities and support; your current and potential future competitive edge as a research leader on an international scale; collaborations (established and potential).
- **Literature references** (maximum 8,000 characters including spaces): Please provide reference information for all the literature used in your proposal, with direct links to a relevant database, e.g., PubMed.
- **Peer review** (maximum 1,000 characters including spaces): Applications for the LEO Foundation Dr Abildgaard Fellowships will be reviewed by an external committee of expert scientists. If you believe that a specific researcher should NOT be invited to review your application, please provide name, affiliation, and brief argumentation here.
- **Layman's abstract** (maximum 1,000 characters including spaces): Please provide a short layman presentation of your project pinpointing which problem you aim to solve, why, and how. If you are awarded a grant, the LEO Foundation will use this text for publication, typically aimed at a science-interested public.

2.3 Funding

Grants of DKK 12 million are awarded for a five-year period. The Foundation will award up to five grants in 2026.

Applicants may apply for funding for the following types of expenses:

- Salary for main applicant (for applicants within clinical science, corresponding to the time commitment to research)
- Salary for others (scientific and technical employees)
- Running costs, incl. tuition fee for PhD students (maximum DKK 80,000 per year), and relevant consumables and fees
- Equipment
- Travel, incl. conference participation
- Publication costs
- Relocation costs (up to DKK 100,000; only applicable for international applicants relocating to a Danish institution if granted a Fellowship, and costs must be reasonable and compliant with national and local guidelines for Danish public research institutions)
- Administrative costs of up to 5% of the total budget or project supplements* (included in the DKK 12 million grant cap)

* For applicants affiliated with Danish universities, administrative costs and bench fees are replaced by project supplements (further instructions in section three, 'How to apply').

Please note:

- The LEO Foundation does not cover salary for student workers, graduates and undergraduates (i.e., below PhD student level).
- The LEO Foundation only supports fully funded PhD student projects. If you apply to the Foundation for partial support for a PhD student, please confirm in the budget that the remaining salary and expenses for the whole PhD project have been secured.
- Applicants cannot apply for funding for activities that have already been carried out or will be carried out before expected notification from the Foundation.
- The LEO Foundation will not support “double salary”, i.e., salary that is already covered by existing base salary or any other funding. If salary is requested for an existing full-time employee, it is mandatory to provide an explanation as to why this is required by the host institution and what it covers exactly (e.g., “Host organization requests that 30% of base salary plus mandatory fringe benefits for main applicant must be covered by external funding”). Please use the “Salary for existing full-time employee(s) justification” field for such purpose (See also Section 5 under “Detailed budget”).

2.4 Appendices to the application

Applicants must include the following four appendices in PDF:

- **Letter of support** (maximum one page): Applicants must submit a signed letter of support from the department head of the administrating institution demonstrating its support and recognition of the applicant and committing to hosting the applicant’s group and administering the grant. It is encouraged to emphasize synergies between the applicant’s proposed research and the research at the receiving department in the support letter.
- **CV** (maximum five pages): Applicants should include in the following order: academic employment, education, and periods of leave with start and end dates, academic awards and honors, overview of obtained research grants and their grant periods, expected time commitment to the Fellowship (only for applicants within clinical science), scientific focus areas, contributions to science, project management experience, international collaborations, teaching, supervision and mentoring experience, and a short bibliographic overview summarizing total number of peer-reviewed publications, number of first and last/corresponding authorships, and number of citations.
- **Publication list** (maximum one page): Applicants must list their up to 10 most relevant articles for evaluating their merits for the present proposal and include a link to an updated profile with their full publication list on either Scopus, Web of Science, Google Scholar, or similar.
- **Letter of intent** (maximum one page): Applicants must submit a letter of intent from a colleague at the Danish host institution, who commits to mentoring the applicant during the grant period on topics such as leadership, supervision, project management, establishing oneself as a faculty member, etc.
- **The appendices** are uploaded in the Appendices section of the Research Details tab.

3 How to apply

Applications must be submitted through our application and grant management portal, LEOnora: <https://leo-foundation.smartsimple.ie/s/Login.jsp>.



3.1 User registration

If you access the system for the first time you will need to create a user account. Upon initial registration you will receive an email with an activation link which must be activated within two hours to confirm your account. In case you exceed this limit, you may request a new one from the “Forgot password” link. If you are a returning user, simply log in with your existing credentials. Remember that your password will need renewal every 90 days.

3.2 Completing your profile

Once logged in you will need to complete all mandatory fields of your user account profile before you can create applications for any open calls. In addition to the mandatory fields, we recommend that you add your academic or business title under “Job title”. Your profile can be accessed by clicking the circle with your Initials in the top right corner of the dashboard.

3.3 Creating an application

First, you will need to identify the correct call. Current calls (recently closed, active and coming) can be found in the list at the bottom of your dashboard when logged in but only the active can be accessed. Some of these calls may include a very short eligibility quiz. You create a draft application for an active call by pressing “Apply Now” for that call. Once created, you can edit the application and save changes at any time until the submission deadline for the related call.

NOTE: Remember to press “Save draft” to save any changes.

3.4 Structure of the application form

The application form consists of several sub-sections (tabs) which are explained in detail below. For most fields there are guidance and/or tooltips available within the system. If you experience any problems, feel free to contact the LEO Foundation at applications@leo-foundation.org.

Please note that the text fields only accept plain text formatting so any rich text formatting which is copied in will be lost.

1. APPLICANT DETAILS

This tab is partly auto populated from the user account profile. Optionally, you can indicate your nationality. Please indicate the proposed Danish hosting institution for the grant period if you are not currently employed there.

Please note that the indicated hosting institution determines your access to either project supplements or administrative costs in the budget (further details on how to set up the budget in section 4 below).

2. RESEARCH INFORMATION

This tab includes information on project title, proposed start and end dates of the grant period and categorization of the project.

- Project title: A short, concise title for the proposed work.
- Proposed start and end dates.
- Project type: This is the overall type of project. Please select the most appropriate category:
 - Basic research
 - Translational research
 - Clinical research
 - Epidemiological research
 - Technology development
 - Other (save and specify in text box)

3. RESEARCH DETAILS

In this tab you present your research proposal. Please note the instructions in the 'APPLICATION CONTENT' section of the Application Guide.

3.a Appendices

Please upload all mandatory documents as PDF files (.pdf). See section on "APPENDICES TO THE APPLICATION" above for details.

In addition to the mandatory documents, you can upload up to four (4) figures in support of the application either through the regular upload field as PDFs or through the Image Upload Field (.jpg or .png format only). Please ensure sufficiently high resolution for proper evaluation. Please add figure number and legend or caption to each figure.

4. REQUESTED BUDGET

Detailed Budget: Please provide a budget in Danish kroner (DKK) for the full five-year grant period, specifying budget year, type, requested amount, and funding source. You also have the option to include a brief, high-level description of the individual budget posts.

Press “Save Draft” before closing the pop-up form to ensure that the main budget page is updated. Only include direct costs in the detailed budget, as any selected percentage of administrative costs will be added automatically if chosen in the ‘Additional Information’ section in the main budget page, cf. below.

The funding requested from the LEO Foundation must amount to exactly DKK 12,000,000 in total, including any administrative costs. In the table below, you can see the available amount of funding for direct costs if a percentage of administrative costs is selected in ‘Additional Information’:

Administrative costs	Direct project costs (DKK) applied for at the LEO Foundation
0%	12,000,000
1%	11,881,188
2%	11,764,706
3%	11,650,485
4%	11,538,462
5%	11,428,571

Note on salaries: The Foundation will not support salary posts that are already covered by existing base salary or any other funding. If salary is requested for the main applicant or others at the level of Assistant Professor or above, this must be accompanied by an explanation as to why this is necessary in the “Salary for existing full-time employee(s) justification” field.

Additional information:

Here, you must specify if you would like to request administrative costs as part of the budget (up to 5% of the total budget). Press “Save draft” again after specifying a percentage to update the budget calculations.

Please also add information on the total number of people to receive salary from the LEO Foundation during the project and add an estimate of the average annual full-time equivalents (FTE) for the project – e.g., if a postdoc works 100% and a technician works 50% on the project, you should add 1.5 in this field.

FOR DANISH UNIVERSITIES ONLY: PROJECT SUPPLEMENTS FOR RESEARCH GRANTS

Project supplements contribute to the coverage of indirect costs incurred at Danish universities and replace budget items such as administrative costs, bench fees, etc.

Please visit [Universities Denmark's website](#) for detailed guidelines on project supplements. Questions concerning project supplements should be directed to the research support staff at your university.

Kindly note that the organization that your user account is affiliated with determines your access to either project supplements or administrative costs in the budget. If you are affiliated with both a Danish university and another research institutions, you must create your application from a user account affiliated with the relevant institution.

If you indicate a Danish university as your hosting institution, project supplements will be calculated and included in your budget automatically:

- If you apply for salary for PhD students, postdoctoral fellows, or research/clinical assistants, select the salary budget type 'Group B/C' (cf. appendix A in Universities Denmark's guidelines)
- Fill in salary costs, associated FTE, research type, and funding source:
 - FTE: Full-time equivalent, i.e., the proportion of a full-time position that the requested funding will support per project year
 - Research type: 'Wet' covers natural, health and technical sciences; 'Dry' covers humanities and social sciences
- Fill in position type in the text box

3.5 Host approval and grant terms

Here, you acknowledge that your host organization approves that the project can be performed there and that you have read and understood the current [Grant Terms](#).

4 Submitting the application

Once you have completed your application, you can submit it by pressing "Submit". It is your responsibility to check the generated application PDF before submitting to ensure that all sections are readable and that all mandatory elements are included.

If any mandatory elements are missing, you will not be able to submit your application, and you will be presented with a list of missing elements. Correcting the missing elements may take time, so we recommend that you initiate and complete your application well in advance of the application deadline.

You will be notified by email (noreply@leo-foundation.org) if there are changes requested to your application or any decision has been made.

The LEO Foundation

The LEO Foundation is one of the largest private funders of independent skin research at universities and hospitals worldwide.

The Foundation provides philanthropic grants to support research that pioneers new discoveries and transforms our understanding of the skin and its diseases.

The LEO Foundation has awarded more than DKK 1.8 billion in total funding to independent research.

www.leo-foundation.org