

## Call for Nominations—TMF Starting Grant—Prequalification

*The Trond Mohn Research Foundation Starting Grant programme aims to assist the University of Bergen (UiB) in recruiting young international or national candidates with outstanding academic merit and research potential.*

The TMF Starting Grant Programme

- gives excellent young researchers the chance to develop into successful research leaders by providing long-term funding
- aids UiB in attracting and retaining excellent young scholars in research areas in line with the university's strategies and priorities and where the university foresees recruitment needs within the next four to five years

The University of Bergen is required to announce a permanent faculty position within the grantee's field of research before the end of the 4-year project period.

### ***TMF now calls for proposals for four-year grants beginning in 2027***

Cross-disciplinary project proposals and proposals from all disciplines are welcome if they correspond to the research strategies and recruitment needs at UiB.

TMF encourages the University of Bergen to nominate candidates with an international background. The nomination process should preferably be conducted with an aim towards:

- Attracting talented researchers to Norway and Bergen as well as retaining talents already based at UiB
- Gender balance by nominating a proportionate number of female relative to male research talents

The programme aims to prepare successful grantees for further career development, for example by obtaining competitive research funding such as ERC Starting Grant, ERC Consolidator Grant or equivalent national and international research funding.

**Eligibility:** UiB may nominate candidates that meet the eligibility criteria as follows:

- Candidates who are employed in permanent position as an associate professor or professor at UiB or who are recruited to a tenure track position at UiB are not eligible for nomination.
- Candidates who have reached the age of 40 by 10. March 2026 are normally not eligible. The age limit may be extended for a maximum of two (2) years in the following circumstances or a combination thereof:
  - parental leave: the age limit may be exceeded by the documented time of leave taken for each child
  - long-term illness<sup>1</sup> or clinical training or national service: the age limit may be exceeded by the documented time of leave taken

**Further information:** For further details about the programme, and how to apply, please see Appendices 1, 2 and 3.

### ***Application deadline***

Prequalification applications must be submitted by **10. March 2026**.

(For further information on how to apply and evaluation criteria, see Appendix 2.)

---

<sup>1</sup> More than ninety days for the candidate or a close family member (child, spouse, parent or sibling).

## Appendix 1 – About the Starting Grant Programme

### ***A programme for UiB departments and faculties***

The purpose of the TMF Starting Grant Programme is to aid UiB in recruiting excellent young researchers and give talented researchers under the age of 40 the opportunity to pursue their own research ideas and lead a research project. Acknowledgement of the recruitment purpose of TMF Starting Grants is an important prerequisite for funding. Nominations should thus be based on a need/possibility, identified by the nominating faculty, for recruitment in the applicable academic field by the end of the project period. Any TMF funding shall be a contribution to the university's priorities and identified recruitment needs.

The nominating faculty must commit to the following should their candidate succeed in the competition:

- To co-fund the project as budgeted in the application
- To employ the successful candidate in a relevant temporary position from the project start date
- To employ other temporary project staff funded by the grant from the foundation
- To announce a permanent faculty position within the candidate's field of research before the end of the 4-year project period.

### ***A programme for talented young scholars***

The programme aims to recruit young, talented, ambitious researchers who desire to build and lead a research group.

The programme is jointly funded by UiB and TMF. Only candidates nominated by UiB may apply for funding under the TMF Starting Grant Programme. Proposals should be prepared by the nominee in close cooperation with the host department and/or faculty and be submitted by the application deadline as stated in the call for nominations.

Successful candidates are expected to:

- Dedicate a full-time position at UiB to the project for the entire duration of the project period<sup>2</sup>.
- Pursue additional competitive national and international funding opportunities (e.g., EU/ERC funding) during the project period.

Candidates cannot be already recruited to or employed in a tenured position as associate professor (førsteamanuensis) or professor at UiB at **the project start date** (Nominees may have tenure at other institutions.)

For detailed information about how to apply, please see Appendix 2.

---

<sup>2</sup> Under certain circumstances there may be a need for adjustment, for instance in cases where clinical practice is essential and/or where the project leader has obtained other individual funding such as ERC or Young Talents. In such cases, the minimum requirement is to dedicate no less than 50 % of a full-time position at UiB for the entire duration of the project period.

## Appendix 2 – How to apply and evaluation criteria

### Two-step submission and selection process

#### **Step 1: Prequalification**

The nominee must prepare a prequalification application in English containing the following:  
(See call page for template downloads)

- Cover page in line with the TMF template
- Project description of up to three (3) A4 pages describing the candidate, the research project and the research environment<sup>3</sup> in which the project will be hosted
- Budget in line with the TMF template
- CV of up to three (3) A4 pages also listing the candidate's most important and relevant publications

A commitment letter from the host faculty in accordance with the TMF template must accompany the application.

#### **Step 2: Final proposal and interview**

After the prequalification, and based upon peer review of the applications, a limited number of candidates will be invited to submit full applications and final budget proposals. A minimum of one month will be given for candidates to prepare the final proposal. The foundation will invite candidates whose proposals reach step 2 to an interview.

### Evaluation criteria

International peer review is the basis for funding decisions, with attention given to the following aspects:

#### **A. Evaluation of the research proposal**

##### *I. Quality of Research*

- *To what extent is the proposed research novel, innovative and ambitious?*
- *To what extent is the proposal focused and realistic?*
- *To what extent it is likely that the proposal will produce new knowledge? If applicable, the importance and potential impact of such new knowledge will be assessed.*
- *To what extent are the objectives and aims clearly stated and described?*
- *To what extent are the proposed methods and procedures innovative, relevant and clearly described?*
- *Which journals are the publications intended for?*

##### *II. The Research Environment*

- *To what extent does the proposal build on external collaboration (international/national)? If applicable, the quality of this collaborative network will be assessed.*
- *To what extent does the principal investigator (including the proposed team) have the necessary skills to fulfil the proposal?*
- *To what extent does the research environment have the necessary infrastructure (technical/administrative, assistance, equipment, workspace, etc.) to support the proposal?*

---

<sup>3</sup> TMF expects that named collaborators have given consent to the PI and the host department about participation in TMF Starting Grants. TMF does not require letters of intent for named collaborators.

### *III. Work Plan*

- *To what extent is the work plan realistic and clearly stated?*
- *How well has the risk been recognised and managed?*
- *To what extent are milestones specified clearly?*
- *To what extent is the budget realistic?*

### **B. Evaluation of the nominated candidate**

*I. Scholarly work and academic ability*

*II. Leadership ability and experience*

*III. Teaching experience*

*IV. Other contributions to the scientific community*

Importance will be attached to the originality and innovativeness of the project, as well as to whether it entails international cooperation. The main criterion for selection will be a high level of academic quality by international standards. In addition to the quality of the candidate and their work, the candidate's ability, and ambition to build and lead a research group, and to cooperate with leading international research groups, will be given particular emphasis.

In the case that two or more applications are found to be of equal scientific quality, the foundation may consider additional aspects. All other criteria equal, such considerations may favour younger candidates, candidates moving to Bergen from abroad or candidates from under-represented groups.

In addition, the host department's plans for recruitment of candidates with outstanding academic merits and research potential may be of importance to the foundation's final decision.

### **Submittal of proposals – application deadline**

One copy of the prequalification proposal CV, commitment letter and budget, combined into one (1) PDF file, should be submitted to the email address: [grants\[at\]mohnfoundation.no](mailto:grants[at]mohnfoundation.no) later than **10. March 2026**.

### **Contact information:**

[Grants\[at\]mohnfoundation.no](mailto:Grants[at]mohnfoundation.no)

## **Appendix 3 – Funding and project grant agreement**

Each TMF Starting Grant will be given as financial support for a research project, maximum NOK 10 million per 4-year per grant.

The overall budget of each project should allow for the establishment of a small research team under the leadership of the project leader and should facilitate the career development of the project leader. It is therefore a prerequisite for funding that any TMF contribution is matched by resources from UiB at about the same level. Such matching resources may include salaries, consumables, equipment, overhead and "leiestedskostnader" (e.g., the use of labs / equipment). **NB: from 2025 the use of overheads on positions funded by UiB may also count towards the host institution's own contribution.**

Normally, the salary of the project leader shall be funded by the foundation. In addition, TMF funding may be put towards:

- PhD fellowships, postdoctoral fellowships, and technical personnel
- Other research expenses directly related to the project e.g., running cost and purchase of minor research equipment.

Funding from the foundation may **not** be put towards:

- Other expenses not directly related to the project
- Overhead costs

In the event a grant application is successful, the foundation and UiB will enter into a project grant agreement, in which their respective responsibilities will be detailed in full.

Grantees are expected to attend the award ceremony in the University Aula on **4. December 2026**.