

# Application Guidelines for research calls



NORWEGIAN **CANCER** SOCIETY

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# 1 INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 PURPOSE OF THESE GUIDELINES

These guidelines explain the application- and evaluation process for all applications through the Norwegian Cancer Society's application management system, with an aim to ensure quality and impartiality throughout the process.

For correct completion of the application, please read these guidelines, the call announcement, and the instruction in the [ApplicationWeb](#)<sup>1</sup> carefully.

## 1.2 ABOUT THE NORWEGIAN CANCER SOCIETY

The Norwegian Cancer Society's strategy is to work towards

- Fewer people will get cancer
- More people will survive cancer
- Improved quality of life for patients and relatives

Through research, prevention, information, support, advice and lobbying, we fight cancer locally, nationally and globally. See our [Strategy 2020-2023](#) for more information.

# 2 USER INVOLVEMENT IN RESEARCH

According to the Norwegian Cancer Society's strategy, implementation of user involvement in research is a tool to achieve patient relevant cancer research.

User involvement in research should reflect the user perspective, needs, knowledge and experiences in the research and may have a long-term impact on patients and their next of kin. This applies to all types of research, although not necessarily to all phases of a research project.

We strongly encourage the applicant to include users as active participants in research projects. The plan for user involvement in a research project is assessed in all applications to the Norwegian Cancer Society, (*Chapter 5, Evaluation of the application*). For further help to make a plan for user involvement in the application, see our [user involvement resource page](#) and the [course for user involvement in health research](#) made by Helse Vest.

## 2.1 DEFINITIONS AND CONCEPTS

The Norwegian Cancer Society uses the following definitions and concepts when assessing user involvement in research.

### **Users in research**

End users of research are typically defined as cancer patients and their next of kin. The public, health care personnel, as well as decision-makers at various levels within the health care services, may also be considered as users in the particular context of a research project.

### **User involvement in research**

User involvement in research means to utilize the specific knowledge and experiences of end users or other relevant groups who will benefit from the results of the research work. User involvement is particularly relevant for cancer-related patient- and practice-based research, i.e. health service delivery as well as clinical research such as clinical studies and registry studies. Basic cancer research that has a long-term potential impact on patients and their next of kin can also benefit from user involvement to increase the research relevance and output, seen from a user perspective.

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<sup>1</sup> We recommend using the web browser Google Chrome.

### **User involvement in different phases of research projects**

Genuine user involvement requires the users to be involved as early as possible in the research process and, where relevant, in all phases of the project, from planning and execution to implementation of results. For definitions of how the Norwegian Cancer Society define phases of a project, see our [user involvement resource page](#).

#### **Roles of users**

The role of users in the research projects must be defined and agreed jointly by the researcher and users and will depend on in which phases user involvement is relevant.

Users can act as *advisors* and contribute to the planning of the research project. As an advisor, the user will typically be involved in identifying research themes or gaps from a user perspective and help disseminate both the project plan and the research results to other users or the public.

A more active role can be taken as a *collaborator* where the user typically will be involved in preparing, questionnaires, interview guides, recruiting informants or collecting and interpreting data, all seen from a user perspective, as well as disseminating information to other users.

## **3 FUNDING SCHEME**

The Norwegian Cancer Society funds different application types with a common goal of promoting research that will benefit cancer patients.

For all calls from the Norwegian Cancer Society, cancer relevance is a prerequisite. Other themes or specifications will be outlined in the call announcement.

**NOTE:** Read the [call announcement](#) for information about:

- Application types
- Scientific remit
- Eligibility of the applicant
- What is funded

### **3.1 WHAT CAN BE APPLIED FOR?**

The Norwegian Cancer Society's funds will only cover positions or running costs. That is, we do not cover indirect costs, compensate for other costs related to leave of absence or investments.

Read the relevant call to understand which of the positions are supported within an application.

#### **Researcher positions – 10-100 % per year**

The researcher position must hold a doctoral degree and at least one completed postdoctoral period. The applicant may apply for his/her own position or unnamed candidates.

#### **Post-doctoral researcher positions**

A post-doctoral fellowship position can be funded with a minimum of 50 % workload each year for 2-4 years. The candidates must have submitted a doctoral degree before the institution can take the appointment decision. The fellowship may not commence until the doctoral thesis has been formally presented, defended and approved. There is no option to apply for a named candidate.

#### **PhD candidate positions**

A doctoral research fellowship position can be funded with either 75 % for four years or 100 % for three years. Any costs relating to work obligations imposed by the degree-conferring organisation must be covered directly by the organisation. There is no option to apply for a named candidate.

#### **Technical positions – 10-100 % per year**

The technical positions may include laboratory technicians, study nurses, statistical personnel, or others that will offer technical assistance to the research project. There is no option to apply for a named candidate.

### Running costs

The running costs can cover general costs related to the research project, including supplies, analyses, conference fees, travel, publications costs, minor equipment, etc., or cover project specific services on an hourly basis.

For all positions:

- If you apply for a part-time position, you must specify why in the project description
- The Norwegian Cancer Society expect the Project Owner to adhere its internal terms and conditions of employment for the posts of the respective positions

## 3.2 MANDATORY ATTACHMENTS

The following attachments are mandatory:

- Project description
- CV with track record for both the Project Manager and the Project Participants
- List of relevant publications for the Project Manager

*NOTE: The Norwegian Cancer Society require the provided templates for both the project description and CV with track record to be used.*

## 4 APPLICATION

The Project Manager must submit the application online using the Norwegian Cancer Society management system, *ApplicationWeb*. All information needed for the online application will be given there. A printout of the application form can be [generated](#).

### 4.1 SUBMISSION

A confirmation email will be sent the Project Manager as a response to a submitted application. Prior to the application deadline, the Project Manager may re-open, modify, and re-submit the application. After the application deadline, a confirmation email will additionally be sent to the Project Administrator.

## 5 EVALUATION OF THE APPLICATION

The Norwegian Cancer Society is responsible for the registration of submitted applications. The deadline is absolute. The Norwegian Cancer Society may reject applications that clearly do not meet the formal requirements.

### 5.1 PEER REVIEW COMMITTEE

Applications are distributed as they are received to a Peer Review committee. The Peer Review Committee consists of four qualified experts associated with universities and hospitals throughout Europe.

### 5.2 SCIENTIFIC EVALUATION

#### MANDATE OF THE PEER REVIEW COMMITTEE

The Peer Review Committee Members are appointed by the Norwegian Cancer Society to conscientiously evaluate the applications according to predefined evaluation criteria with a defined grading system. The Peer Review Committee presents a consensus-based ranked list of all applications to the Norwegian Cancer Society's board for decision.

#### PROCESS FOR SCIENTIFIC EVALUATION

##### *Individual evaluation by Committee Members*

Using the evaluation criteria and grading system, two of the members, selected by the Committee Chair, will conduct an *in-depth evaluation* of the application where the outputs are 1) a grade for each evaluation criterion, 2) an overall grade, and 3) a written evaluation text. Further, at least two of the

remaining Committee Members will perform an assessment based on the same criteria but who will only give an overall grade of the application.

### **Evaluation by the Committee**

Based on the evaluations of the Peer Review Committee Members the Committee agrees on a ranked list of eligible projects. In the overall assessment, projects considered to have a good plan for active user involvement should be prioritized.

The Committee Chair will lead the overall plenary scientific evaluation and is responsible for quality checking and finalizing the Committee's official comments to applicants shortly after the meeting.

The chair, on behalf of a united Committee, delivers to the Norwegian Cancer Society a ranked list of the applications with:

- Grade for each assessment
- Overall grade
- Written evaluation
- Suggested funding (the Committee might suggest a revised budget according to their understanding of resource need into the project)

### **EVALUATION CRITERIA**

The Norwegian Cancer Society has defined a set of scientific evaluation criteria (*Table 1*) and a grading system (*Table 2*). In the overall grade, criteria 2 and 3 carry double weight. *Cancer relevance, or other specific themes, is scored as yes/no.*

**Table 1. Evaluation criteria**

<b>1 Cancer relevance/ Relevance to a specific theme</b>	<p><i>Is the proposed project relevant for cancer patients (short/ long term)?</i> An assessment of direct or indirect relevance to cancer biology, prevention, diagnosis, treatment or management of cancer, and/or relevance to patient care and health services.</p> <p>And, if a theme has been specified in the call announcement: <i>Is the proposed project relevant for the described theme?</i></p>
<b>2 Scientific quality</b>	<p><i>Application quality.</i> Presentation of scientific background, objectives and content (research proposal/hypothesis) of the project.</p> <p><i>Originality.</i> Does the project contribute to significant theoretical and/or methodological advances and/or development of new scientific knowledge and practices in the field?</p> <p><i>Methodological approach.</i> Relevance of the proposed methods to answer the hypotheses and scientific questions, including the breadth of methodological approaches, level of effort.</p> <p><i>Innovation potential.</i> The potential for developing new innovative products and services.</p>
<b>3 Qualifications of the Project Manager and Project Group</b>	<p><i>How qualified is the Project Manager and the Project Group (including collaborators) to conduct the proposed project?</i></p> <p>This includes assessment of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Project Manager's expertise and experience within the field of research</li> <li>• Project Manager's <i>relevant</i> publication record</li> <li>• Degree to which the Project Manager and Project Group are part of a research environment that has competence and required resources needed to ensure the success of the project</li> <li>• Project Manager's experience as a project manager and/or supervisor</li> <li>• Relevance of Project Partners or Participants to the project</li> <li>• Project Manager's independence as a researcher (published work, mobility)</li> <li>• Interdisciplinary collaboration will be positively weighted, when relevant</li> <li>• International cooperation will be positively weighted, when relevant</li> </ul> <p><i>NOTE 1: Implementation of user involvement is assessed under this criterium.</i></p>

	<i>NOTE 2: The Norwegian Cancer Society instructs its Committee Members to evaluate the qualifications in accordance with the DORA declaration<sup>2</sup>.</i>
<b>4 Feasibility</b>	<p><i>To what extent is the project plan and resource requirements adapted to the tasks of the project?</i></p> <p>This includes assessment of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Likelihood of drawing reliable conclusions from expected results and selected method(s)</li> <li>· Current pilot data</li> <li>· Realistic and sensible budget</li> </ul>
<b>5 Impact</b>	<p><i>To what extent will the research results contribute to new knowledge or respond to a knowledge gap that may have a potential impact on prevention or treatment of cancer patients (short or long term)?</i></p> <p>The impact of the project may be assessed from the perspective of both patient, services and society.</p> <p>This includes assessment of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Impact for cancer patients or next of kin</li> <li>· Societal impact</li> <li>· Dissemination, communication and exploitation strategy</li> </ul>

**Table 2. Assessment grading**

<b>7 Outstanding</b>	Research of internationally high standard of high interest; most likely to be published in top international journals; internationally highly recognized scientists
<b>6 Excellent</b>	Research of internationally high standard of great interest; expected that the research can be published in high impact international journals; leading scientists in Norway
<b>5 Very good</b>	Research of international standard, research of interest; expected that the research will be published in high impact journals; scientists with a very good reputation
<b>4 Good</b>	Research of acceptable, international standard, expected that the research will be published in well-known specialized journals; scientists with a good reputation
<b>3 Fairly good</b>	Research of fair international standard which is of minor interest
<b>2 Weak</b>	Research of fair/low standard that is of very little interest
<b>1 Poor</b>	Inadequate projects without interest or significance, or projects that are too poorly described to be evaluated

## 5.3 USER INVOLVEMENT ASSESSMENT

### MANDATE OF THE USER REPRESENTATIVES

The User Representatives are appointed by the Norwegian Cancer Society.

The User Representatives' responsibility is dual. First, to assess whether user involvement is relevant for the research project based on preferences, values and needs of cancer patients and their next of kin. Second, if relevant, to ensure that the research project has a valid plan for implementation of user involvement.

It is a prerequisite for the Norwegian Cancer Society's User Representatives to be aware of their role as users and should assess applications without being biased or have conflicting interests.

<sup>2</sup> From the [DORA declaration](#): For funding agencies: 2) Be explicit about the criteria used in evaluating the scientific productivity of grant applicants and clearly highlight, especially for early-stage investigators, that the scientific content of a paper is much more important than publication metrics or the identity of the journal in which it was published. 3) For the purposes of research assessment, consider the value and impact of all research outputs (including datasets and software) in addition to research publications, and consider a broad range of impact measures including qualitative indicators of research impact, such as influence on policy and practice.

## PROCESS FOR USER REPRESENTATIVE EVALUATION

Two User Representatives are appointed to each Peer Review Committee and conduct an individual assessment of each application based on the English abstract. For each application, one User Representative conducts an *in-depth* assessment, the other a general assessment. The User Representatives' individual assessments provide the basis for their joint recommendation which includes an overall grade and an evaluation text for each application.

The Peer Review Committee takes the recommendations into consideration in their final ranking of proposals. In the case of two equally scored projects, the Peer Review Committee is encouraged to prioritize projects with the higher user score.

## ASSESSMENT CRITERIUM

The User Representatives' task is to assess *whether* user involvement is relevant to the project and if so, to determine to *what degree* this is adequately implemented in the project plan (*grading 1-7*) (Table 3).

**Table 3.** Assessment criterium with grades for planned user involvement

7	Users are involved from the design phase and through the whole research process (when relevant), and they are members of a permanent user advisory group with regular meetings
6	Users are members of a permanent user advisory group with regular meetings
5	The research group has started to formalize user involvement with concrete ideas and plans for the project
4	Plans for user involvement are insufficient or there is some, but inadequate, contact with users or a user organization
3	Vague intentions for user involvement
2	Misinterpretation of user involvement
1	There is no plan for user involvement

## 5.4 DECISION

The Board finally decides on allocation based on the recommendations of the Peer Review Committee.

According to the statutes of the Norwegian Cancer Society Article 3-7, the board is the Norwegian Cancer Society's appropriating body. The board makes its final decision based on the peer review committee's ranking lists, which also includes the User Representative's assessment result.

## 5.5 FEEDBACK

The Project Manager and Project Administrator will be notified of the outcome of the application by email (see call announcement for approximate date). The decision email will include the individual assessment criteria grades, the overall grade, and the Peer Review Committee's evaluation text.

Successful applicants and their Project Administrators will receive an email with further details regarding the terms and conditions for research grants. The Project Administrators are responsible for formally accepting grants.

## 5.6 IMPARTIALITY

The [statutes of the Norwegian Cancer Society](#) § 10-5 regarding impartiality, applies also in the research proposal process.

The Committee Members and User Representatives must therefore sign a conflict of interest form based on the Project Manager's name, affiliation and publication list, the name and affiliation of all Project Participants and the English abstract.



Committee Members and User Representatives are automatically disqualified from evaluating research proposals if they themselves, family members, or other near relations are participants in the project or if they have a professional collaboration with the applicant or any of the Project Participants.

Other possible grounds for declaring conflicts of interest include the following:

- the Committee Member or User Representative has published together with persons participating in the project
- the Committee Member or User Representative has professional or personal conflicts with persons participating in the project
- the Committee Member or User Representative has been supervising someone participating in the project
- the Committee Member or User Representative is a party in another case that is in direct competition with the proposal

Committee Members and User Representatives may claim partiality on the grounds of personal reasons. This must be respected even if it is not evident that such partiality exists.

Neither Committee Members nor User Representatives are permitted to contact applicants concerning their submitted proposals during the evaluation process.

In cases where a User Representative declares partiality, a deputy representative is assigned.

## 5.7 CONFIDENTIALITY

All members of the Peer Review Committees and the User Representatives must sign a confidentiality agreement. The Committee Members and User Representatives have a legal duty neither to disclose any sensitive information acquired during the evaluation process, nor reveal the results of the evaluation process.

## 6 GRANT TERMS AND CONDITIONS

Please read terms and conditions for research grants in the contract template carefully.

*OF PARTICULAR NOTE: In the contract you accept:*

- **Double financing:** *If the Project Manager receives offers of funds for execution of all or parts of the same project, then the Project Owner is obligated to notify the Norwegian Cancer Society. The Project Manager must provide an explanation of how the total project costs will be distributed between the different financing sources. The Norwegian Cancer Society may require that the Project Owner decline all or parts of the Norwegian Cancer Society's grant based on the degree of overlap.*
- **Clinical studies:** *All intervention and observation studies involving human beings shall be registered in [ClinicalTrials.gov](https://clinicaltrials.gov) or other [ICMJE-approved registries](#) prior to the enrolment of the first study participant. All interventions studies/clinical trials should additionally be registered at [helsenorge.no/kliniske-studier](https://helsenorge.no/kliniske-studier). Information about the Norwegian Cancer Society as a funding source shall, if applicable, be included.*
- **Reporting:** *Annual progress reports and a final report at the end of the project must be submitted by the Project Manager. Reporting will be initiated by the Norwegian Cancer Society via ApplicationWeb and must be responded to within the given deadlines*
- **Handling of deviations:** *Project changes must be applied for in the ApplicationWeb without undue delay by the Project Manager or Project Administrator on behalf of the Project Owner*
- **Release of results and credit:** *The results should be published in preferably Open Access digital archives without delays and be credited the Norwegian Cancer Society. The results should be disseminated to a broader audience according to the plan. Register the project number from the Norwegian Cancer Society on all publications and presentations related to the project in the Current Research Information System in Norway, Cristin*

- **Quarantine - For Open Call only:** The Norwegian Cancer Society reserves the right to quarantine new applications to Open Call from the same Project Manager until the end of the project. In the case where overall score is lower than 2.5 the Project Manager will be quarantined from applying to Open Call for a duration of one year, starting application year 2021

## 7 CONTACT DETAILS

For questions, please contact us at [forskningsadministrasjon@kreftforeningen.no](mailto:forskningsadministrasjon@kreftforeningen.no).

For contact persons and phone numbers, see the call announcement.

## 8 LINKS/APPENDICES

- Project description template (see [call announcement](#))
- CV- template (see [call announcement](#))
- PDF of Application form (see [call announcement](#))
- Contract template (see [call announcement](#))
- The Norwegian Cancer Society's [Strategy 2020-2023](#)
- The Norwegian Cancer Society's [user involvement resource page](#)
- The Norwegian Cancer Society's [Ethical principles and guidelines](#)