

Talent4Bern Program

2nd Call

Purpose

One of the strategic missions from the Medical Faculty at the University of Bern is to promote the next generation of Medical and Biomedical researchers. The aim of this funding scheme is to support researchers applying for an SNSF Starting Grant to establish their own independent research group at the Medical Faculty. Talent4Bern will support candidates during the proposal preparation by providing mentoring and guidance with the written proposal and oral evaluation. In addition, for the successful SNF grantees, Talent4Bern will provide a start-up package and coaching/mentoring opportunity throughout the project duration.

Important Dates

Call release date:	01.07.2023
Application due:	01.09.2023
Decision on invitation to Symposium:	10.10.2023
Symposium:	07.11.2023
Help in preparation of Stage 2 of SNSF Starting Grant application	August 2024
Start of projects:	01.01.2025 (earliest)
Maximum project duration:	5 years

Research Topic

We accept research proposals in any area of basic, translational and patient-oriented medical and biomedical research. We encourage applications aligned with the [Strategy 2030](#) from the Medical Faculty, namely in the fields of aging, infection and inflammation, health and prevention, medical technology, cardiovascular research, neuroscience, cancer, dentistry research.

Applicant Eligibility

Candidates who are eligible to apply for the 2024 SNF Starting Grant/SNSF Professorial Fellowship. The eligibility criteria for the 2024 SNSF call are not yet available, but they are expected to be similar to the previous calls, namely:

After your PhD defence:

- You have at least 2 years of research experience
- You submit your application no more than 8 years after the date of your PhD defence.

After your medical degree (state examination or equivalent):

- You have at least 3 years of clinical work and at least 2 years of research experience
- You submit your application no more than 12 years after obtaining your medical degree.

After your PhD equivalent, defined as 3 years of research activity after obtaining the higher education degree:

- You have at least 2 years of research experience
- You submit your application no more than 8 years after obtaining a qualification equivalent to a PhD.

The time periods are calculated based on the submission deadline.

For the complete call document of the previous SNSF Starting Grant call (2023) see [SNSF Starting Grants \(snf.ch\)](https://www.snsf.ch).

Submission documents

CV

Please use the format from [SNSF](https://www.snsf.ch)

Research Proposal Form (template provided)

Front Page: Project Title, Name, current affiliation, suggested affiliation (s) at University of Bern.

Abstract: max. 1800 characters including spaces

Research Plan:

- max. 6 pages and 20'000 characters including spaces, in Times New Roman or Arial with a size of at least 11, 1.15 line spacing and margins of 2 cm on the side and 1.5 cm at the bottom, condensed fonts are not allowed, references do not count for the page/characters limit.
- Must be structured into the following sections:
 - **State-of-the-art and objectives:** Specify the proposal objectives in the context of the state-of-the-art in the research field. It should be clear how and why the proposed work is important for the field, and what impact it will have if successful, such as how it may open up new horizons or opportunities for science, technology or scholarship. Specify any particularly challenging or unconventional aspects of the proposal, including multi- or inter-disciplinary aspects.
 - **Methodology:** Describe the proposed methodology in detail including any key intermediate goals. Explain and justify the methodology in relation to the state-of-the-art, and particularly novel or unconventional aspects addressing the 'high-risk/high-gain' balance. Highlight any intermediate stages where results may require adjustments to the project planning budget estimation.

Support Letter from Host Institute (template provided)

A letter of support from the host institute must be included in the application and must be signed by the head of the institute/department. This will allow the committee to understand the level of commitment of the host institute. We encourage candidates to consider double affiliations within two clinics or institutes of the Faculty of Medicine, to encourage interfaculty collaborations. The letter should address the following points: added value of the candidate for the Institute/Clinic and Medical Faculty, support regarding space, personnel, equipment accessibility, financial contribution, career planning beyond SNSF Grant, options of double affiliations, and collaborations with other departments or institutes. Use the template provided.

Contact details of two referees

Include contact information of two references and briefly explain your relation to that person. Ideally one of them is from the current supervisor and the other your PhD supervisor.

Submission Procedure

Applications are to be submitted via the online grant portal of the Faculty of Medicine "Selectus" (<https://www.grants.medizin.unibe.ch/position/8028161>). Only online applications are accepted. Incomplete or non-compliant applications, or those received after the deadline will not be considered.

Please direct administrative questions to Valentina Rossetti (grants.meddek@unibe.ch) and scientific questions to Nadia Mercader (nadia.mercader@unibe.ch).

Selection Process

Evaluation criteria

Submissions will be evaluated according to

- Compliance with the eligibility criteria both to the Talent4Bern and the SNF call.
- Excellence of the Research Project (5 points):
 - originality and relevance of the research project;
 - integration and added value of the project for the host institute and the University of Bern;
 - use of high-end rigorous methodology that fulfils ethical requirements;
 - research promoting collaborations;
 - feasibility.
- Excellence of the candidate (5 points):
 - research output and scientific achievements
 - peer-reviewed publications, with special weight on first- and last-authorships. We will consider the contribution of the candidate to the publication
 - contributions to science (organization of conferences, mentoring, dissemination activities, publication of open-source datasets, scripts, preprints...)
 - leadership and international visibility (Memberships in panels, reviewing activities)
 - scientific qualification of the applicant to carry out the proposed research project
- Mobility: has the candidate worked in different scientific environments, (international) host institutes? Has the candidate been successful in different research areas?
- Ability to conduct independent research with high scientific quality and impact
- Potential for career development

The Evaluation will be carried out in compliance with DORA recommendations.

Evaluation procedure

Applications received will be screened for formal compliance and evaluated by the review board according to the criteria defined under "evaluation criteria". The candidates that passed the first selection round will be invited to a symposium that will take place on 07.11.2023. On this event, the candidates will give a scientific presentation, including an outline of their future research project. This event will also provide an opportunity for "one to one" interviews and onsite visits of the host institutes and clinics.

Talent4Bern Program Support

After the evaluation, the selected candidates will have a mentor assigned to them to support with the preparation of the SNSF proposal. The candidates whose project passes to the interview stage of the SNSF application process will also receive training by the Talent4Bern to prepare for the interview.

In case of a successful SNSF application, the Faculty of Medicine will provide successful applicant(s):

- Start-up package of 50'000 CHF that can be used to cover the following expenses (when correctly justified):
 - Costs for laboratory supplies, consumables.
 - User fees for Core Facilities.
 - Hiring of research staff (PhD salaries, Laboratory Technicians, study nurses, etc.). Salaries must be in accordance to university regulations
 - Costs for small equipment, according to University of Bern guidelines.
 - Computers and Office Material.
- Provision of the costs for a PhD Position for a maximum of 4 years for Clinics within Inselgruppe/ Provision of the costs for a PhD Position for a maximum of 2 years for the rest of Departments and Institutes from the Medical Faculty.
- Coaching/mentoring opportunity during the duration of the project.

Special measures-circumstances

The call will be adapted to SNSF Professorial Fellowships or ERC Starting Grant schemes, shall they substitute the Starting Grant call 2024.

Researchers who have been invited to the Second Phase of the SNSF evaluation can enter the Talent4Bern Program if the host institute is within the Medical Faculty of the University of Bern. Candidates that receive a 2024 SNSF Starting Grant or equivalent but did not participate in the Talent4Bern selection process can enter the Talent4Bern Program if joining the Medical Faculty of Bern.