

The Norwegian Taxonomy Initiative

– call for project proposals 2025

CRITERIA AND GUIDELINES FOR ASSESSMENTS

ASSESSMENT PROCESS

1. The panel of experts are reviewed for impartiality before they are cleared to evaluate grant applications.
2. In cases of partiality among experts for one or several applications, the disqualified expert(s) will not receive the application(s) nor take part in the evaluation process of this (these) application(s).
3. The experts will divide the responsibility for the different applications amongst them (principal or secondary assessor) based on the applied species group(s), before the applications are distributed to the experts. Each expert shall read and evaluate all applications based on the criteria before the expert panel meeting. The expert responsible for each application ("principal assessor") will lead the assessment process and is responsible for writing the assessment text during the expert panel meeting to reflect the panel's unified assessment of the application.
4. Applications shall be evaluated based on the three main criteria: Quality, Implementation and Relevance, using a scale from 1-5 where 5 = "Excellent" and 1 = "Poor" (see below for details).
5. At the two-day expert panel meeting, the experts will go through and discuss all the applications and complete the assessments. The expert panel shall come to an agreement for a common and final grade for each of the three criteria on each application and write the assessment texts using the assessment forms. The NTI project coordinator will have a role as observer and facilitator.
6. After assessments, the expert panel will make a list of the application's total grade score where the criteria are weighted as follows: Quality 30%, Implementation 30% and Relevance 40%. If two or more applications have an equal total grade score, project proposals will be prioritised based first on the knowledge status of the taxonomic group in the project proposal and second, on the suitability of the project in relation to the portfolio of previous and ongoing NTI projects. A proposal for which applications that should receive grants within the total budget of the call will be prepared and sent to the NBIC board for final decision.

EVALUATION CRITERIA

QUALITY

The application should have a good academic approach. Quality is evaluated for the project's scientific quality, including its plan for scientific and societal dissemination of results. Evaluation of quality includes the overall professional competence of the project manager (as appropriate to the career stage) and the competence of the project group if the application has cooperating project participants.

Scientific quality

Consider the professional quality of the proposed project and evaluate whether the project's goals, including subgoals, are clearly and adequately specified. Consider whether the selected methods are clearly described and appropriate in terms of the project's objectives. The choice of methods should be evaluated against alternative solutions. The status of taxonomic knowledge for focused species groups should be well described in the application. The applicant(s) should also give a good description of habitats to be mapped.

Scientific and societal dissemination of results

Evaluate the project's plan for communication and dissemination of results to different target groups (public, managements and research (incl. students)). The plans for dissemination should be ambitious, clear, and realistic and describe how the results at a scientific and popular level are to be communicated. Examples includes popular scientific dissemination (such as SoMe, blogs, articles), scientific publications, workshops/courses, species information pages and/or identification keys to the webpage artsdatabanken.no.

Professional competence

Professional competence should be assessed based on the group's (project manager and collaborative project partners) overall competence and (proven expertise in biosystematics and experience with biodiversity inventories, and the group's international and national activity and publishing in the field (as appropriate to the career stage of each participant. The project group's knowledge about the taxonomic group(s) of the application should also be evaluated.

IMPLEMENTATION

The application should provide a good description of the project implementation, from a professional and organisational point of view.

Organisation and progress plan

Evaluate how feasible and organised the proposed project is. Assess the project manager's experience and ability and/or potential to coordinate and implement the project as described in the application, including the project group's overall professional quality for implementing the project. Take also into consideration whether the progress plan is realistic and feasible in relation to the goals and activities described in the project and whether the various elements are well coordinated in relation to each other.

Feasible and realistic budget

Consider whether the costs are in line with efforts and anticipated results.

National and international collaboration

Evaluate to what extent the project will collaborate with other relevant professional communities (e.g. relevant researchers, institutions, organisations), both nationally and internationally.

RELEVANCE

Relevance should be evaluated for the degree to which the proposed project is in accordance with the call and the mandate of the Norwegian Taxonomy Initiative (NTI). The focus for the project proposal should be to identify which species exists in Norway in one or more poorly known species groups (taxonomic units) of eucaryote, multicellular organisms in Norway. Projects with a main focus on ecology, behaviour, genetics (metabarcoding) etc. that comes to an expense for the taxonomic focus will have a lower relevance.

New knowledge of Norwegian species diversity

Evaluate to what extent the project will improve and produce new taxonomic knowledge of species diversity for species group(s) where the knowledge status in Norway is considered weak. Consider the project's potential to improve the DNA barcode library (BOLD) of Norwegian species. Secondary, evaluate to what extent the project will strengthen knowledge of the species' habitat and the species' occurrence in Norway.

Improving national competence and recruitment within biosystematics

Evaluate to what extent the project will strengthen the taxonomic competence in the Norwegian scientific community.

Evaluate to what extent the project will contribute to transfer knowledge between taxonomists, e.g., from experienced to young taxonomists and students. Evaluate to what extent the project will contribute to recruitment to the field of biosystematics.

GRADING SCALE 1-5

The grades should be applied to each of the three criteria (excellence, implementation and relevance) even though the text does not directly fit. A fair assessment requires that the grading scale is applied as equally as possible on all applications.

5 - Exceptionally good

The proposal is of exceptional quality, and of the very highest international standard. All relevant aspects of the criteria are exceptionally well addressed. Shortcomings are not present.

4 – Very good

The proposal is of very good quality, and of a very high international standard. All relevant aspects of the criteria are successfully addressed. Only minor shortcomings are present.

3 – Good

The proposal is of good quality. The criteria are well addressed. Some shortcomings are present.

2 – Fair

The proposal is of fair quality. The criteria are broadly addressed. Significant weaknesses are present.

1 – Weak/Poor

The proposal is of weak or poor quality. It fails to address the criteria or cannot be assessed due to missing or incomplete information.

GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR WRITING THE ASSESSMENTS

The principal assessor is responsible for writing the assessment form to reflect the panel's unified assessment of the application. The written assessment serves as important feedback for the applicant. The final assessment should consist of a grade and written comments for each criterion.

The expert committee are kindly asked to follow these general guidelines:

- The written comments you provide should be consistent with and justify the given grades.
- Use full sentences that provide a clear message.

- Formulate sentences that provide constructive feedback the applicant can use to improve their application.
- Do not refer to the applicants age, nationality, gender, or personal attributes.
- Provide feedback that represents the overall feedback from the committee (i.e., avoid using "I" or "my" etc.).
- The proposals should be evaluated independently of each other. Hence, avoid comparison between proposals.
- Even if proposals have been submitted in previous years, each proposal shall be viewed and assessed as a new proposal.
- Avoid negative/demeaning statements regarding the Project Manager and collaborative partners, the proposed science, or the scientific field concerned.

Examples of good vs. poor comments

Poor comments merely echo the score <i>The innovative aspects of the proposed research are poor</i>	Good comments explain it <i>This proposal is not convincingly innovative in X, and it does not properly take [xxx] into account</i>
Poor comments are ambiguous <i>The resources for the project are unrealistic</i>	Good comments are clear <i>The project is overambitions, given the complexity of the activity proposed and the duration of the proposed work</i>
Poor comments are vague and subject to interpretation <i>We think the management is probably inadequate</i>	Good comments are precise and final <i>The management plan is inadequate. It does not include a clear description of overall responsibility for the activities; it also lacks a risk management plan.</i>
Poor comments are inaccurate and provide an opening for complaint <i>There is no discussion of a dissemination strategy. The supervisor is not experienced.</i>	Good comments close the question <i>The proposal fails to address the dissemination strategy at the appropriate level of detail.</i> <i>The supervisor does not demonstrate in the proposal an adequate level of experience in this field.</i>
Poor comments include words like... <i>Perhaps, think, seems, assume, probably...</i>	Good comments include words like... <i>Because, specifically, for example...</i>

Source: [Guidelines for referee panels](#). The Research Council of Norway