

The Norwegian Taxonomy Initiative

– call for project proposals on species inventories 2024

CRITERIA AND GUIDELINES FOR ASSESSMENTS

ASSESSMENT PROCESS

1. The panel of experts, and the members of the Norwegian Taxonomy Initiative (NTI) Project Group, 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) particular application(s).
3. The experts will divide the responsibility for the different applications amongst them 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 criterias before the expert panel meeting. The expert responsible for each application (“primæransvarlig”) will lead the assessment process and write the assessment text during the expert panel meeting.
4. Applications shall be evaluated based on the three main criteria: Excellence, Impact, and Implementation, 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. In addition, the applications that receive a collective score of 10 or more (possible collective score: 3-15 points) from the expert panel will be assessed for their relevance to the call and mandate of the NTI. Assessment of the relevance criterion is carried out by the NTI project group in a project group meeting. This meeting will take place approximately two weeks after the expert panel meeting. After assessment of the relevance criterion, the NTI project group will make a list of the application's total grade score where each of the four criteria are weighted equally. 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

EXCELLENCE

The application should have a good academic approach. Excellence is evaluated for the project' scientific quality, including its methods, study design and description of taxonomic status and habitat of the taxonomic group.

Scientific quality

Consider the professional quality of the proposed project and evaluate whether the project's goals, including subgoals, are clearly and adequately specified.

Methodological approach & study design

Consider whether the selected methods and study design are clearly described and appropriate in terms of the project's objectives. The choice of methods should be evaluated against alternative solutions.

Description of taxonomic status and habitat

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.

IMPACT

Impact is evaluated on the project's potential outcomes and impacts regarding improving knowledge of Norwegian species diversity, strengthening biosystematics expertise in Norway, and its dissemination of results.

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 taxonomic competence

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

Recruitment and competence transfer

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.

Scientific and societal dissemination of results

Evaluate the project's plan for communication and engagement activities. 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 to relevant target groups (management, research, students, and the public). The applicant's ability to communicate the results to important users of this information in the society should also be considered.

IMPLEMENTATION

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

Professional competence

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

In cases where several researchers work together, assess the group's overall professional quality for implementing the project. For collaborative projects, also assess the project manager's experience and ability to coordinate and implement the project as described in the application.

Feasible and realistic budget and progress plan

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

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.

National and international collaboration

Evaluate to what extent the project will collaborate with other relevant institutions, both nationally and internationally.

RELEVANCE (assessed by the NTI project group)

Relevance should be evaluated for the degree to which the proposed project is in accordance with the call and the goal and ambition of the Norwegian Taxonomy Initiative (NTI).

Compliance with the call

Evaluate how the application complies with the guidelines and stipulations set out in the call. The focus for the project proposal should be to do taxonomic mapping/ inventories of one or more poorly known species groups (taxonomic units) of eucaryote, multicellular organisms in Norway.

Compliance with NTI goal and ambition

Evaluate how the application complies with the goal and ambition of NTI given in the mandate: "The goal of the NTI is to strengthen knowledge about species in Norway for the benefit of the public, management and research. The ambition is to map all multicellular species of plants, fungi and animals in Norway."

Synergies

Evaluate whether the project will create synergies in terms of coordination with relevant inventories and research projects in Norway/other Nordic countries.

GRADING SCALE 1-5

The grades should be applied to each of the criteria (excellence, impact and implementation; and relevance for applications assessed by the NTI project group) 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. We therefore ask you to read these criteria guidelines thoroughly.

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

A good proposal. The criteria are well addressed. Some shortcomings are present.

2 - Fair

A proposal 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 expert committee are kindly asked to follow these general guidelines:

- The comments you provide shall reflect the given grade.
- 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 matters.
- 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 an individual 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

<p>Poor comments merely echo the score <i>The innovative aspects of the proposed research are poor</i></p>	<p>Good comments explain it <i>This proposal is not convincingly innovative in X and it does not properly take [xxx] into account</i></p>
<p>Poor comments are ambiguous <i>The resources for the project are unrealistic</i></p>	<p>Good comments are clear <i>The project is overambitions, given the complexity of the activity proposed and the duration of the proposed work</i></p>
<p>Poor comments are vague and subject to interpretation <i>We think the management is probably inadequate</i></p>	<p>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></p>
<p>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></p>	<p>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></p>
<p>Poor comments include words like... <i>Perhaps, think, seems, assume, probably...</i></p>	<p>Good comments include words like... <i>Because, specifically, for example...</i></p>

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