

Talent4Bern Program

3rd Call

1. July 2024

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1. 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:	01.07.2024
Application due:	01.09.2024
Decision on invitation to Symposium:	Mid Oct 2024
Symposium:	22.11.2024

For candidates passing to the 2nd stage of SNSF Starting Grant application process

Mock Interviews	August 2025
Start of projects:	01.01.2026 (earliest)
Maximum project duration:	5 years

2. 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.

3. Applicant Eligibility

Candidates who are eligible to apply for the 2025 SNF Starting Grant/SNSF Professorial Fellowship are eligible for the Talent4Bern program. The eligibility criteria for the 2025 SNSF call are not yet available, but they are expected to be similar to the previous calls (see below). You can find them on the SNSF webpage: [SNSF Starting Grants \(snf.ch\)](https://www.snf.ch/en/starting-grants).

Please check your eligibility with the SNSF Starting grant office before you apply for the Talent4Bern program. For the calculation of the time periods (e.g. time after PhD), please consider the submission deadline of the SNSF starting grant.

Eligibility criteria for the past call:

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.

4. Submission documents

I. Cover letter

II. CV

Please use the format from SNSF ([Guidelines](#)). Further, we strongly suggest you to update your ORCID profile, where you can list also further information such as distinctions, services, society memberships, etc.

III. 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.

IV. 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. Please use the template provided.

V. 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.

5. 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/8847366>). 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).

6. 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.
- 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.
- 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 above. The candidates that passed the first selection round will be invited to a symposium that will take place on 22.11.2024. 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" meetings and onsite visits of the host institutes and clinics.

7. 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 running costs such as:
 - Laboratory supplies, small equipment, office materials.
 - Software, computers, IT-services, user fees for Core Facilities.
 - Journal fees, conference fees and travel expenses.
- For applicants hosted by a clinic of the Inselspital: provision of the costs of a **PhD Position** for a maximum of 4 years.
- For applicants hosted by all other departments and institutes of the Medical Faculty: provision of the costs of a **PhD position** for 2 years. Please note that in this case, the commitment of the host institution to cover the remaining 2 years of PhD salary must be stated in the support letter.
- Coaching/mentoring opportunity during the duration of the project.

8. Special measures-circumstances

The call will be adapted to SNSF Professorial Fellowships or ERC Starting Grant schemes, shall they substitute the Starting Grant call 2025.

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 2025 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.