



# **HANDBOOK**

## **The Science Fund of Landspítali**

### **Rules for the grant year 2026**



## INTRODUCTION

This Handbook of the Science Fund of Landspítali is intended for applicants and members of the expert review panels, and applies to the grant year 2026. Its purpose is to enhance transparency across the entire allocation process for all stakeholders—from the public call and application deadline through award decisions and the administration of funded projects. It sets out the Fund’s rules along with practical information, including the rights and obligations of grant holders. The Handbook is issued annually in connection with the published call. To ensure it serves its purpose, all parties to the process (applicants and review panel members) are encouraged to read it in full.

*The English version of this Handbook is a translation of the Icelandic original. In the event of any inconsistency, the Icelandic text shall prevail.*

## ROLE OF THE SCIENCE FUND OF LANDSPÍTALI

The Science Fund of Landspítali supports research projects carried out by the hospital’s staff. To this end, the Fund awards grants for up to three years to ambitious research of high scientific merit. The Fund does not provide support for projects classified as quality improvement initiatives.

## TIMELINE

The Science Fund of Landspítali makes its allocations annually in the spring.

The application deadline is announced at least six weeks in advance. Indicative dates for the 2026 application and review process are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. The estimated timeline for Grant Year 2026	
October 24th, 2025	Call open for submission of applications
December 8th, 2025	Submission deadline
Spring 2026	Funding decision

## ELIGIBILITY OF APPLICANTS

### ***Main conditions for funding:***

- The application must comply with the general guidelines and rules governing grants from the Science Fund of Landspítali.
- All required approvals from the relevant ethics committee(s) and/or other authorities must be in place at the time funding decisions are made in April.
- The project leader must be a permanent employee of Landspítali in at least a 30% position.
- An up-to-date CV and publication list for the Project leader must accompany the application.
- All requested information must be provided. Applications that fail to meet the Fund’s rules or eligibility requirements will be rejected.

### ***Additional information:***

- Only one grant may be awarded per research project.
- A Project leader may submit a maximum of two grant applications, provided they concern two different projects.
- In the case of BSc, MSc, or PhD projects, the supervisor is usually the Project leader.
- The Fund does not support research projects or components of projects that have already been completed.
- If applying for a new grant for a project that has previously received support from the Fund, the earlier project must be completed and a final report submitted.

## 1. RULES AND GUIDANCE FOR APPLICANTS

### 1.1 Grant categories

#### 1.1.1 Incentive Grants

Incentive Grants are intended for ambitious projects of high scientific value and genuine novelty at an international level, with strong prospects for publication in respected peer-reviewed international journals. To be eligible, the Project leader must have published at least five scientific articles in recognized peer-reviewed international journals as first or last author.

Incentive Grants may be awarded for up to three years, up to a total of ISK 18 million (ISK 6 million per year).

If an application for an Incentive Grant is not successful, it will automatically be considered as an application for a Research Grant.

#### 1.1.2 Research grants

Research Grants support ambitious projects with high scientific merit and international novelty, with strong prospects for publication in respected peer-reviewed journals. To be eligible, the Project leader must have published at least two peer-reviewed articles as first or last author.

Research Grants may be awarded for up to three years, up to a total of ISK 6 million (ISK 2 million per year).

### 1.2 Eligible Costs

Approved expenses include salaries, operational expenses, and contracted services. No own contribution is required.

#### 1.2.1 Salaries

The Fund supports salary expenses for research assistants hired to work in project execution, as well as salaries for students participating in the project.

Salary levels should be based on general wages and institutional agreements, with an additional 25% to cover employment-related charges. The Fund does not support payments for overtime, nor any payments that would result in income exceeding 100% of full-time daytime employment, whether due to research activities or other work.

If a Landspítali employee hired for the project intends to take unpaid leave to work on the project, confirmation from their supervisor must be submitted with the application.

The Fund does not support payments to other institutions or companies.

#### 1.2.2 Operational costs and contracted services

Applicants may request funding for essential project-related supplies and specialized services.

If costs involve access to equipment outside Landspítali, a price quotation must be attached.

All operational costs must be specified in detail in the designated fields of the electronic application form.

The Fund does not cover costs for article publication fees, thesis printing, proofreading of manuscripts or theses, travel or conference expenses, or any other costs related to the dissemination of research findings. The Fund also does not support the purchase of laboratory equipment or other items (such as computers) normally provided by Landspítali. Applicants can apply to the Landspítali Publication Fund for support with publication fees.

### 1.3 Application form and supporting documents

- Project description using the Fund's template—customized for the 2026 round and available in the application system (attachment).
- CV of the Project leader (Europass format recommended).
- Copies of required permits\*.
- Publication record (Google Scholar link or equivalent).
- Manager's confirmation of unpaid leave, if applicable (attachment).

\*Approval from the National Ethics Committee must be in place before a grant can be awarded. A copy should be emailed to the Fund ([visindasjodurlsh@rannis.is](mailto:visindasjodurlsh@rannis.is)).

The expert evaluation of an application is based solely on the information provided in the application and its attachments. No additional documents will be accepted after the deadline. Applications that do not use the correct template for the project description will be excluded from review. Such exclusion may occur at any stage of the evaluation process.

Applications must meet all eligibility requirements to receive Expert panel review. If it becomes clear during evaluation that one or more requirements are not fulfilled, the application will be withdrawn from the process.

Only applications submitted through the Rannís electronic application system will be accepted. The application and all attachments must be submitted in English.

#### Annex A: Project description

Applicants must use the designated template available in the application system.

The template requires 12 pt. Times/Times New Roman font, line spacing of 1.5, and margins of 2.5 cm, which may not be changed.

The project description must follow the prescribed structure, which may not be altered:

- A. Specific aims of the project, research questions/hypotheses, feasibility, originality, and impact
- B. Present state of knowledge in the field
- C. Research plan and deliverables
- D. Management and co-operation
- E. Data management and publication of results in open access

**To ensure equal treatment of applicants, any application not using the correct form and template will be excluded from review.**

Before uploading the project description into the application system, the reference list must be separated into a standalone document. These two documents should be uploaded individually as PDF files. The system will count only the pages of the project description, not the references.

The maximum length of the project description is 5 pages for Research Grants and 7 pages for Incentive Grants. In addition, a cover page and an instruction page are required, meaning that the system allows the upload of a 7-page PDF for Research grants and a 9-page PDF for Incentive Grants.

#### Annex B: Curriculum Vitae

The CV must be concise and no longer than two pages. You may include a link to a publications page (e.g., ORCID). Include current position, education and training, previous positions and distinctions, and up to five publications or book chapters relevant to the project.

**Annex D: Confirmation of Unpaid Leave**

If relevant, the application must include written confirmation of unpaid leave from regular duties, signed by the applicant's supervisor.

**1.4 Notification to Research Manager at Landspítali**

When an application is submitted through the application system, the Research Manager at Landspítali is automatically notified. The notification includes the title and number of the application, along with the name of the Project leader. The Research Manager confirms the Project leader's employment percentage at Landspítali and forwards this information to the Fund's administrators at Rannís.

## 2. HANDLING OF APPLICATIONS

Applicants are encouraged to read Chapters 3 to 5 — *Evaluation of Applications* and *Guidelines for Expert Reviewers* — which explain the assessment criteria applied by the review panels.

### 2.1 Pre-screening

Applications are pre-screened by the Fund's administrators at Rannís. Incomplete applications, or those that do not comply with the Fund's rules, are rejected without further evaluation, and the applicant is notified accordingly.

The main reasons for rejection include (though are not limited to):

- Incomplete applications
- Incorrect use of the project description template
- Modifications made to the template
- The Project leader not meet the Fund's eligibility requirements
- The applicant having contacted members of the Expert review panel or the Fund's Board regarding their application
- Suspicion of misconduct

### 2.2 Expert Panel Evaluation

Valid applications are reviewed by two expert reviewers. Each reviewer submits a written, reasoned evaluation and ranks the applications based on scientific merit, in line with the guidelines for reviewers.

### 2.3 Funding Decision

The Board of the Science Fund of Landspítali awards grants based on the recommendations of the Landspítali Science Council, which serves as the awarding committee. After the panel completes its work, the panel Chair meets the Science Council to present the review and any issues arising. The Chair specifically discusses applications with scores of 6 or 7.

The Science Council decides on recommendations for funding, taking into account the Expert Panel assessments as well as the Fund's general priorities, allocation policy, and available resources. The Council may seek additional advice beyond what the panels can provide if considered necessary.

When the allocation decision has been made, applicants receive a formal letter including the panel's final evaluation. The Board's decision, following the Science Council's recommendations, is final.

### 3. AWARD ADMINISTRATION: AGREEMENTS, PAYMENTS, AND REPORTING

#### 3.1 Contract Agreements

Contracts are entered into between the Project leader and Rannís, acting on behalf of the Board of the Science Fund of Landspítali. The Project leader must finalize the agreement within three months of the award year's notification; otherwise, the grant lapses. Funds are paid only into bank accounts managed by Landspítali.

#### 3.2 Distribution of Annual Payments for Funded Projects

A separate contract is issued for each grant year; a new contract is signed once the annual report is approved. Distribution of payments is as follows:

- **Year one:** one-time payment (100%) upon signing the contract
- **Year two:** one-time payment (100%) after approval of the annual report
- **Year three:** one-time payment (100%) after approval of the annual report

#### 3.3 Reporting

Annual and final reports must describe project progress and justify any changes to the research plan. The financial report must detail incurred costs that reflect grant usage. The Fund's staff may request further information from grant holders and consult the panel if needed. If a report is not approved, the Fund may terminate the agreement. Funds not used in accordance with the approved application must be returned.

The Project leader is responsible for submitting annual reports after each grant year—no later than the application deadline for new grants—and the final report no later than 1 June after the final grant year.

If applying for a new grant, no new funds will be paid out until the previous project's final report has been received and approved, no later than October of that year.

Templates for annual and final reports are available on the Fund's webpage at Rannís.

## 4. GUIDELINES FOR EXPERT PANELS

The panel's role is to evaluate applications based on scientific merit, the applicants' capability and environment to deliver the work, and the likelihood of measurable outcomes and benefits. Each application receives a written assessment and a score.

### 4.1 Electronic Review System

Panel members access all applications, attachments, and the panel score sheet in the Fund's electronic system. Full access requires first agreeing to a confidentiality statement and declaring any conflicts of interest. Panel members cannot access attachments for applications where they are conflicted.

### 4.2 Review Process

Applications are distributed among panel members; two reviewers are assigned to each application, though all members are encouraged to familiarize themselves with the full set. Draft assessments are prepared once all assigned reviews are complete, followed by a panel meeting. Applicants receive the panel's assessment after the Board has finalized the year's awards.

#### Evaluation criteria

The scoring of applications is based on three main criteria: the scientific merit and novelty of the project, the quality of its execution, and the expected scientific or societal impact. The weighting of these criteria, and the elements considered under each, are outlined in Table 2.

**Table 2. Evaluation criteria and weight in total score**

<b>Scientific quality and novelty</b>	<b>45%</b>
Scientific quality	15%
Novelty	15%
Clarity of objectives and research questions	15%
<b>Implementation</b>	<b>45%</b>
Quality and feasibility of the work plan	15%
Suitability of methods and research design	15%
Competence of the applicants and the consortium	15%
<b>Impact</b>	<b>10%</b>
Potential scientific and/or societal impact	10%

### 4.3 Expert panel meetings

Before the meetings, two Panel Members prepare written reviews of each application in the electronic review system. Drawing on these, the first reviewer compiles a summary highlighting the strengths and weaknesses of the applications assigned to them.

During the meetings, any Panel Member who has declared a conflict of interest regarding a particular application must leave the room while that application is discussed, and this is recorded in the minutes by the Panel's administrator. The first reviewer presents the application together with their assessment, followed by the second reviewer's comments. The Expert Panel then discusses the evaluation and agrees on a final opinion. The review must be constructive and formulated in such a way that the applicant can gain the greatest possible benefit from the feedback.

After the meetings, once all applications have been reviewed, they are ranked into quality categories and graded according to the overall judgment of the Panel. A separate list is compiled for each type of grant, and applications are arranged by category. The quality categories range from 1 to 7, with Category 7 reserved for outstanding applications (see Table 3). When the discussions are complete, the chair of the Expert Panel confirms the final evaluation and presents it to the Science Council, which makes the funding decision on behalf of the Board.



**Table 3. Grading scale for Expert Panel evaluation**

<b>7 Outstanding</b>	Exceptionally strong application with negligible weaknesses
<b>6 Excellent</b>	Very strong application with only minor weaknesses
<b>5 Very good</b>	Strong application, generally well-designed Some weaknesses, but overall merits outweigh shortcomings
<b>4 Good</b>	Reasonable quality, but with clear weaknesses Scientific contribution or novelty is moderate
<b>3 Fair</b>	Some merits, but several significant weaknesses Limited impact and competitiveness
<b>2 Weak</b>	Major weaknesses in design, feasibility, or impact Low scientific quality
<b>1 Poor</b>	Very serious flaws Not considered scientifically sound or feasible

## 5. GENERAL INFORMATION

### 5.1 Board and Expert Panels of the Science Fund of Landspítali

The Board of the Science Fund of Landspítali consists of five members: the Chief Executive of Landspítali, the Chair of the Science Council of Landspítali, the Executive Director of Medicine, the Executive Director of Nursing, and the Executive Director of Operations and Human Resources. The Board approves allocation rules and guidelines and decides on the distribution of funding, based on the recommendations of the Science Council, which are based on the evaluations of the Expert Panel.

Applications submitted to the Fund are assessed by the Expert Panel, whose members are appointed by the Science Council of Landspítali. The Council may also nominate representatives to the Panel. The Panel is composed of active scientists from outside Iceland, holding at least associate professorship qualifications and with extensive research experience. Members are selected for their expertise in health sciences, life sciences, and clinical research. When appointing Panel Members, consideration is given to maintaining a broad range of expertise as well as gender balance. The chair of the Panel is appointed from among its members.

### 5.2 General Inquiries

Administrators at Rannís provide information and assistance on weekdays from 9:00 to 15:00. General questions regarding the Fund and applications under review should be directed to: [visindasjodurlsh@rannis.is](mailto:visindasjodurlsh@rannis.is).

### 5.3 Code of Conduct for Administrators

Members of the IRF Board, members of Expert Panels, external experts, IRF staff and others that administratively handle applications to the IRF are bound by strict confidentiality. Applications, including all enclosed materials and review sheets, are confidential. Confidential information is not to be used for any other purpose than the review process and may not be disclosed, published, or otherwise made available to a third party. No copies of confidential information shall be made available in any format except for review purposes. After completion of the review, a copy of the application and review documents will be stored in the electronic registry of Rannís. IRF Expert Panel members understand and acknowledge that any disclosure or misappropriation of this confidential information may cause the owner irreparable harm. The owner of the confidential information has the right to apply to a court of competent jurisdiction for specific performance and/or an order restraining and enjoining any further disclosure or breach and for such other relief as the owner shall deem appropriate. Such ownership rights are in addition to the remedies otherwise available to registered owners or parties that derive rights from the owner. Applicants also have the option of making use of Auðna Tæknitorg for their projects, whose representatives are equally bound by confidentiality under a declaration signed between Landspítali and Auðna.

### 5.4 Conflict-of-Interest Rules

Rules on conflicts of interest apply to all members of the Board of the Science Fund, the Science Council, and the Expert Panel. Disqualification arises in cases defined under the Public Administration Act (No. 37/1993), in situations of close friendship, family ties, or marriage with the applicant, in cases of personal opposition, or in situations of professional competition or close collaboration between a Panel Member or Board Member and the applicant. Panel Members cannot serve as applicants to the Fund. If a member of the Board, the Science Council, or the Expert Panel is participating in an application, they must withdraw from any discussion of allocations within the relevant field, and an alternate will be appointed. Anyone deemed ineligible under these provisions must leave the meeting while the application is being considered, and this is recorded in the minutes. Where an application comes from the same institution or company as a member, the closeness of ties must be assessed; however, such ties do not automatically result in disqualification. It is the responsibility of Board

Members, Council Members, and Panel Members to recognize circumstances that may disqualify them from evaluating applications to the Fund.

## 5.5 Research Misconduct

If suspicion arises of fabrication, falsification, plagiarism, or misuse in connection with an application or a funded project during or after the funding period, the host institution and the Fund's Board will be notified without exception. If such issues arise during review, the application will be withdrawn while the institution investigates. If cleared, the application returns to review; if misconduct is confirmed, the application is rejected and the institution is held responsible for appropriate actions. The Board may also initiate an independent investigation into allegations.

## 5.6 Open Access to Results

Under Act No. 3/2003 (as amended) on public support for scientific research, results funded with public money should be published in open access where feasible.

All publications must acknowledge the Fund and grant number, e.g.: *This work was supported by the Science Fund of Landspítali, grant number...*, in Icelandic: *„Rannsóknin var styrkt af Vísindasjóði Landspítala, styrknúmer... „ „*.

## 5.7 Data Management

Applications must also explain how data will be stored and accessed, as appropriate. Applicants must describe the management and availability of tools, software, or algorithms collected or generated in the project, in line with the FAIR principles (Findable, Accessible, Interoperable, and Re-usable). For projects that receive funding, a data management plan must be submitted in accordance with international standards, the FAIR principles, Act No. 90/2018 on Data Protection and the Processing of Personal Data, the European General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR, EU 2016/679), and ethical standards on data management.