



Researchfish

CASE STUDY

How tracking research impact has benefited the Novo Nordisk Foundation

Monitoring research impact can not only potentially increase your organization's research funding but also help your organization track its progress toward its ultimate goals. These are just two of the benefits the Novo Nordisk Foundation has achieved since beginning to track research impact using Researchfish in 2015.

Ensuring positive contributions to society

The Novo Nordisk Foundation's philanthropic mission is to support research and innovation in the prevention and treatment of cardiometabolic and infectious diseases; advance knowledge and solutions to support the green transition in society; and invest in scientific research, education, and innovation to enable a world-class life science ecosystem.

Over the past decade, the board of directors of the foundation decided it would expand its activities but only under this condition: "that we would monitor and track the results, outcomes, and impacts in society of the board's grant funding so that the board could make sure the foundation's funding contributed in a positive way to society," says Dr. Thomas Alslev Christensen, Senior Vice President of the foundation and head of its Impact Department.

This need to document the impact of funded research led the foundation to begin using Researchfish.

"We looked around the world to see if we could find a system that would enable effective and seamless reporting from our branches," explains Dr. Christensen. "And we very quickly identified Researchfish and had confidence in it because the [United Kingdom Medical Research Council](#) developed it. So we took the chance to sign a contract in 2014 with Researchfish, and we have not regretted it."

With the adoption of Researchfish, the foundation gained the ability to capture information on the outputs, outcomes, and impacts of its funded research. "The benefits are now very clear—for the first time, we have systematic reporting from all our grants and are able to clearly demonstrate the impact of our activities to all stakeholders."

In other words, thanks to adopting the Researchfish platform, the board gained the assurance it needed to expand its research funding.

“Through Researchfish, we’ve been able to show that 21% of the most significant national and international clinical guidelines cite journal articles funded by the Novo Nordisk Foundation.”

Keeping researchers on track

Because of the foundation’s focus on impact, they ask all grant applicants to describe the expected societal impact of their research and how they can increase the likelihood of their intended impact.

The foundation then helps the grantees work backward from their desired impact to the activities they need to carry out to achieve that impact.

“Given the grantee’s targeted impact, we ask, ‘What outcomes would deliver that impact?’” explains Dr. Christensen. “And what are the outputs that would deliver that outcome? And which activities must take place to achieve the targeted output?”

With these expectations in place, the foundation then uses Researchfish to monitor and track the outputs and outcomes of the funded research and assess whether the researchers are on track for their intended targets. The foundation shares this assessment with the researchers, which lets them know whether they need to make any adjustments.

As a result, both the foundation and its funded researchers have greater awareness of their state of progress toward their ultimate goals: namely, specific societal impacts. “We help our researchers focus on their ultimate goal—having research breakthroughs and developing fantastic innovations—so they can get the next Nobel Prize,” says Christensen.



Tracking beyond bibliometric data

“We recognize that publication of research and citations of that published article by others is just one of many research outputs and outcomes,” says Dr. Christensen. “Other outputs and outcomes are the use of new knowledge in patent applications, policy documents, treatment guidelines, and new technologies.”

A platform that analyzed only journal article publications and citations of those articles would be inadequate to demonstrate the full scope of a researcher’s work.

For this reason, Researchfish uses technology and algorithms to collect a variety of research outputs and outcomes, including engagement activities, collaborations, influence on policies, clinical trials, and other uses of new knowledge.

“Without Researchfish, we would lose the connection between our activities and outcomes,” says Dr. Christensen.

How Novo Nordisk Foundation achieves 100% compliance in grantee reporting



If your grantees struggle to meet your organization’s reporting requirements, you might be surprised that 100% of Novo Nordisk Foundation researchers provide required research updates.

The foundation achieves this impressive metric even as it funds a significant number of researchers each year: in 2022 alone, the Novo Nordisk Foundation supported more than 8,000 people in science all over the world.

What makes the foundation’s researchers so reliable? According to Christensen, “The main reason is that the foundation requires funded research institutions to report annually. In addition, we explain to them why it is so important for us to measure the impact of research: if we want to continue to fund research, we need to know the impact and value of our funding to society and be able to explain it to the public. This is part of the foundation’s license to operate.”

Dr. Christensen tells that as from April 2023, there is public access to information about all the grant-awarding activities of the Novo Nordisk Foundation and all the reported data collected from Researchfish is shown in an interactive dashboard on the Foundation’s webpage. “In this way we champion full transparency regarding awarded grants and the reported output and outcome data we collect from Researchfish. We hope in this way to further improve the quality of reported data and motivate researchers to show more societal impact of their scientific activities”.

Dr. Christensen also reminds funded researchers that sharing their reports is an opportunity for the researchers to showcase to the world the good work they’re doing. “I tell them, ‘Please tell the world what you’re doing—we will be so proud of you,’” Dr. Christensen explains. “And I think this is also good motivation for them.”