

4 Next Step Research Grant Nurturing female leaders



**Academic staff
(females only)**

(1) Aim

Women who are top leaders in global academic circles are strongly expected to continuously explore and implement new research topics and publish the results of their research, while also carrying out the responsibility of acquiring external funding. The first essential step is applying for KAKENHI grants, but sometimes this funding cannot be received for the academic year where it is needed. This program provides women researchers who could not receive external funding with single-year grants to help them launch their research project and refine its content, and thus put them in a better position to successfully apply for external funding for the following year.

(2) Program details

Funds are provided to help researchers carry out new research projects without other sources of external funding, gather data, and publish research outcomes.

- The grant provides awardees who applied but were not accepted for KAKENHI funding with up to 500,000 yen/year if their KAKENHI assessment rating was A or B, or with up to 150,000 yen/year if their rating was C. The amount may be reduced depending on budgetary circumstances and amounts awarded under other programs.
- The first round of applications will be publicly solicited in May, but priority will be given to those who receive an "A" or "B" rating.
- A second call for applications is tentatively scheduled for September, but may be cancelled depending on the number of grants awarded in the first period and on the remaining budget. Those who received the grant for the first period are not eligible to apply for the second period.
- The grant is intended to offset expenses directly essential to the implementation of research, such as the following:
 - Registration fees for participation in academic conferences.
 - Purchase of equipment/supplies necessary for performing research; honoraria and other compensation to assistants, subjects, etc.
 - Expenses essential to publication of research, such as article submission fees and English proofreading fees
 - Travel expenses necessary for carrying out the research project.

(3) Eligibility to apply

Female academic staff of Tohoku University (Associate Professor, Senior Assistant Professor, Assistant Professor, Research Associate, Specially Appointed Research Fellow(PD/RPD), whose principal duties are with Tohoku University. *¹ This excludes Specially Appointed professors (management) and those whose employment is 100% funded by external sources and who are obliged to exclusively serve the organization providing the funding.

***¹ Excluding employees serving under the cross-appointment system and others whose principal employer is an organization other than Tohoku University.**

- Those who have competitive research grants (including university expenses) totaling 2 million yen or more in the relevant academic year are ineligible to apply.
- Applicants need to have unsuccessfully applied for FY2026 KAKENHI grants, and received an assessment rating of A, B, or C.
- However, those who applied for multiple FY2026 KAKENHI grants and were awarded at least one are ineligible.
- Those who applied for multiple FY2026 KAKENHI grants and had not received an assessment rating for at least one application as of the first period deadline can apply for the Next Step Research Grant's second period, provided that the ratings for their unsuccessful KAKENHI applications were A, B, or C.
- Applications made not be made for both this grant and the Start-up Research Fund at the same time.
- Those whose employment is 100% externally funded may apply for this grant, provided that the funding source does not require them to focus exclusively on the funded project, and instead allows

them to also engage in independent research efforts at their discretion.

(4) Application forms

- Attachment 3: Proposed Use Declaration Form for the Next Step Research Grant (AY2025, First Period) (AY2026,)
- Document showing result of FY2026 KAKENHI grant application review (assessment rating & average score of individual criteria)※Please note that if you check the “Do not disclose results” checkbox when applying for Grants-in-Aid for Scientific Research, you will not be able to apply for this project.
- Notice of employment (copy)

(5) Deadline for submission of application

Friday, October 2, 2026

(6) Where to submit application

- Center for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, Tohoku University (DEI Center)
- Fill out the relevant Google form and submit it to the DEI Center along with all required attachments (in PDF format).
 - ▶Google Form : <https://forms.gle/drgYeino3ZfHH1Z59>

(7) Application screening

- Documents will be examined by the screening panel within the DEI Center.
- During the screening process, you may be asked to prepare and submit additional documents or come for an interview.
- Selections are scheduled to be announced in late October 2026. The scheduled date for disbursing the funds is October 1, 2026.
- Applications will be evaluated based on the KAKENHI ratings and average scores of the individual criteria. Awardees will be selected from the top-ranked applicants.
- If many applications are received, preference will be given to departments with a low proportion of female academic staff.

(8) Year-end report

The awardee shall prepare a report, as separately prescribed, at the end of the academic year.

(9) Other information

- The awardee shall, as far as possible, cooperate with the following types of requests regarding the promotion of DEI by the Committee for DEI Promotion and the DEI Center (may be taken into consideration in the selection process):
Participation in symposiums and seminars, poster presentations, responding to questionnaires, writing articles/comments for public-relations materials, and other requests.
- When announcing the results of research made possible by this program, the awardee **must clearly acknowledge** assistance provided under the program. (Please refer to the attachment “Q&A” for a practical example.