



ZonMw Open Competition

Free, curiosity-driven research

CALL FOR PROPOSALS funding round 2024

Please note: This document is a translation of the Dutch version of this document. In case of any differences or other inconsistencies between the Dutch text and the English translation, the Dutch text is legally binding and prevails.

Please note: This is an updated version of this document. A discrepancy in section 3.1 'Who can apply' has been corrected regarding the exclusion of main and co-applicants who previously received a Vici or Open Competition grant.

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1 INTRODUCTION

In this Call for proposals information is provided about the application procedure for the grant round 'ZonMw Open Competition 2024'. The ZonMw Open Competition is commissioned by the Dutch Research Council (NWO).

In this Call for proposals you will find information about the aim of this programme (chapter 2), the conditions for the grant application (chapter 3) and the assessment of the grant application (chapters 4 and 5). This is the information you need to submit a grant application. Chapter 6 states the grant obligations that apply in the event a funding is awarded. Chapter 7 contains the contact details and Chapter 8 provides financial information.

1.1 BACKGROUND

Free, fundamental scientific research forms the basis for understanding the world around us - for advancement and development. Therefore, ZonMw promotes curiosity-driven and innovative fundamental research in the field of biomedical and health research¹ and care innovation.

1.2 AVAILABLE BUDGET

The budget for the round of 2024 is €23,000,000.

In addition, the ZonMw programme Dementia Research Programme (OPD) offers additional budget with a maximum of € 1,000,000 (see also section 3.2). Any remaining amount will revert to the OPD programme.

The maximum available budget for this Call for proposals thus totals €24,000,000.

1.3 SUBMISSION DEADLINES

This call for proposals is valid for the ZonMw Open Competition, funding round 2024.

The deadline for submitting a project idea² is **April 18, 2024**, before **14.00 CEST**.

The deadline for submitting a full proposal³ is **September 12, 2024**, before **14.00 CEST**.

¹ For guidance: health research covers research into the occurrence, origin, recognition and prevention of diseases, treatment of diseases, reduction of disease burden, and the functioning of the healthcare system. The aim of health research is to contribute to health promotion or alleviation of disease burden. It encompasses the entire scope of medical-biological research, clinical research, population and health(care) system research.

² Project idea refers to 'prior notification' according to the [NWO Grant rules 2017](#).

³ A full proposal means a full application according to the [NWO Grant rules 2017](#).

2 AIM

2.1 AIM OF THE PROGRAMME

The aim of ZonMw Open Competition is to create space for curiosity-driven, creative collaboration leading to groundbreaking science of exceptional quality in the field of health research. This funding instrument has no thematic limitations and focuses on research proposals in all scientific disciplines with a question or problem that concerns, or overlaps with, fundamental research into healthcare and innovation.

The expected outcome of a project is primarily scientific advancement (increased knowledge, development of modelling and theory) within a new collaboration between research groups (team science). In addition, knowledge utilisation/participation are important criteria (see also section 5.2C).

Research applications can be monodisciplinary, multidisciplinary or interdisciplinary in nature, provided that there is a clear focus on fundamental (bio)medical research.

2.2 TARGET GROUP

ZonMw Open Competition specifically intends to initiate and establish new lines of research by promoting an original and creative synergy of areas of expertise that do not naturally enrich each other. For such innovative and curiosity-driven team science, it is important to properly describe the synergetic composition and diversity of the team with regard to experience, gender, and affiliations. Complementarity in (technical) skills and expertise of individual team members is important in this context. See assessment criterion B for substantive conditions (section 5.2).

HEALTH(CARE) RESEARCHERS ARE EXPLICITLY INVITED TO SUBMIT APPLICATIONS.

In comparison to other (bio-)medical disciplines, health(care) research is at risk of being underrepresented compared to other (bio)medical disciplines, both in submission and allocation. The board aims for a proportional representation of health(care) research in the Open Competition (see section 4.1).

2.3 KNOWLEDGE UTILISATION AND PARTICIPATION

Much scientific research addresses important issues in our society, culture and economy. The potential, and preferably broadly applicable, effect of the chosen research on science and society is an important element of the ZonMw Open Competition. Knowledge utilisation may relate to results and conclusions, but also to other knowledge in healthcare research. Examples include creating knowledge about research methods including equipment use, data and data infrastructures, theoretical enrichment through multidisciplinary insights, or knowledge at the operational level. To this end, ZonMw calls for plans for sharing research results outside the scientific community, even if a concrete application would not be conceivable or feasible in the near future. ZonMw thereby values creative knowledge utilisation strategies to inspire and mobilise stakeholders, as well as to engage users and effective end-users in scientific and societal impact. More information on this topic can be found on the NWO website at <https://www.nwo.nl/en/knowledge-utilisation>.

3 CONDITIONS FOR APPLICANTS

This chapter contains the conditions that apply to your grant application. First, it describes who can apply for a grant (section 3.1) and what you can request funding for (section 3.2). Subsequently, you will find the conditions for preparing and submitting the application (sections 3.3 and 3.4) and the specific grant conditions (section 3.5).

3.1 WHO CAN APPLY

Professors, assistant professors, associate professors and other researchers with a comparable position⁴ can submit an application as main or co-applicant⁵ if they:

- are employed (i.e., have a paid appointment) at one of the following organisations:
 - Universities established in the Kingdom of the Netherlands;
 - University medical centres;
 - KNAW and NWO institutes;
 - the Netherlands Cancer Institute;
 - Max Planck Institute For Psycholinguistics in Nijmegen;
 - NCB Naturalis;
 - Advanced Research Centre for NanoLithography (ARCNL);
 - the Princess Máxima Center

- and have a paid position for at least the duration of the research for which the funding is requested. Persons who hold an emeritus professorship or a zero-hours employment agreement are excluded from submission.

Researchers from *other* research institutes can only submit an application as co-applicant if at least the following cumulative conditions for the legal entity have been satisfied:

- is based in the Netherlands⁵;
- is independent in conducting research;
- has a public responsibility;
- has no profit motive other than for the purpose of further research⁶;
- in the research for which funding is requested, the institute works together with a university or UMC, which is apparent from personnel or material contribution to the research from that university;
- the researchers have freedom of publication in the international scientific literature.

Please contact the Programme Office **as soon as possible** if you are considering submitting an application with a research team where this would be the case.

⁴ A comparable position means that a researcher demonstrably has a comparable number of years of experience in conducting scientific research and supervising other researchers as a professor or associate professor.

⁵ Co-applicants with an position abroad should make use of the *Money follows Cooperation* module (see module 5B) and meet all conditions with the exception of the location in the Netherlands. The main applicant should always be located in the Netherlands.

⁶ NWO does not award a grant if, in the opinion of NWO, awarding a grant would result in the granting of State aid in terms of Article 107 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union. Past experience has shown that STZ hospitals have difficulty meeting this criterion.

Please note: These conditions are reviewed by ZonMw prior to submitting the application. To this end, the applicant's organization must provide the following documents by email by the 1st of April 2024 at the latest:

- a recent extract from the Chamber of Commerce;
- the deed of incorporation or the articles of association or other formal document showing the public responsibility and the absence of a motive for profit;
- the most recent financial statement accompanied by an audit certification.

If the assessment of the applicants by ZonMw has not taken place beforehand, ZonMw **cannot** process the application.

The 29 Dutch public knowledge organizations (see the list of these [National Institutions](#)) do not have to provide the aforementioned documents in advance, since ZonMw assumes that these organizations will in principle meet the conditions set out in section 3.1. If ZonMw deems further assessment necessary after submission of the proposal, the applicant from such an organization must submit these documents upon request.

ADDITIONAL CONDITIONS:

Main applicant:

- Main applicants must have obtained their PhD at least 15 years ago at the time of the project idea deadline. The date on the doctoral degree is decisive for this. This condition does *not* apply to co-applicants.
- Remains the main applicant throughout the application process; this cannot be changed;
- All communication from ZonMw takes place with the main applicant;
- The main applicant is expected to be able to bear responsibility for the entire project (for which the execution often requires complex coordination) both in terms of content and organisation.

All applicants (main and co-applicants):

- A research team:
 - consists of one main applicant and at least one co-applicant;
 - consists of applicants from at least two different organisations (see list of organisations above in section 3.1);
 - Must meet the definition of the target group (section 2.2);
- Main and co-applicants may only be involved in one ZonMw Open Competition application in round 2024;
- Main and co-applicants have an active role in the implementation of the project and must apply for a significant part of the budget, appropriate to the research described. Non-budgeted stakeholders act as advisors and are not included as members of the research team in *My ZonMw*.

Excluded as main and co-applicants are:

- Researchers who have submitted a proposal in the Vici funding round 2024 to ZonMw or any of the other NWO domains;
- Researchers who have been awarded a Vici or ZonMw Open Competition grant in the rounds of 2021, 2022, 2023 or 2024.

3.2 WHAT CAN BE APPLIED FOR

The maximum grant that can be applied for is € 800,000. Optionally, you can also apply for an investment module of € 100,000 to maximum € 250,000, in addition to the maximum funding that can be applied for. The maximum funding amount for applications including the investment module is therefore € 1,050,000. A project has a duration of at least four to a maximum of five years.

The budget modules available for this Call for proposals (including the maximum amounts) are listed in the table below. Request only what is essential for execution of the project. Please refer to Chapter 8 for a more detailed explanation of the budget modules.

Budget module	Maximum amount
PhD candidate	Max 3 positions, according to salary tables of <i>Universities of the Netherlands (UNL)</i> or <i>NFU</i> ⁷
Postdoc	Max 3 positions, according to salary tables of <i>UNL</i> or <i>NFU</i> ⁷
Professional Doctorate in engineering (PDeng)	in combination with PhD candidate(s) and/or Postdoc(s), according to salary tables <i>UNL</i> or <i>NFU</i> ⁷
Non-scientific personnel (NSP) at universities	€ 100,000, according to salary tables of <i>UNL</i> or <i>NFU</i> ⁷ , in combination with PhD candidate(s) and/or Postdoc(s)
Other scientific personnel (OSP) at universities	€ 100,000, in combination with PhD candidate(s) and/or Postdoc(s)
Research leave for applicants	Max 3 positions, 5 months, 1fte; according to salary tables of <i>UNL</i> or <i>NFU</i> ⁷ .
Staff of universities of applied sciences, educational institutions and other organisations	€ 100,000, according to the applicable rates in table 2.2, column 'Hourly rate for productive hours, excl. VAT' of the Manual Tariffs Government Salary tables NWO .
Material costs	€ 20,000 per year per FTE of scientific position
Investments small (up to € 100,000)	Falls within the maximum amount that can be applied for (€ 800,000)
Investmentsmodule (up to € 250,000)	This amount is in addition to the maximum amount of this grant (€800,000). The investment module has a minimum of €100,000 (lower limit for data collections is €25,000) and a maximum of €250,000. In cash matching of 25% is mandatory.
Knowledge Utilisation	€ 50,000
Internationalisation	€ 25,000
<i>Money follows Cooperation</i>	Maximum 50% of the total requested budget (excluding the addition of the optional investment module). The only exception is a collaboration with Luxembourg (FNR) in which a maximum of €500,000 on top of the ZonMw budget may be requested.

⁷For personnel abroad, local rates are reimbursed. However, there is a maximum, which is based on the UNL rates settled with the values from the NOW Country correction coefficients (CCC) table, see [Money Follows Cooperation | NWO](#).

COLLABORATION WITH LUXEMBOURG

NWO and ZonMw have made agreements with the Fonds National de la Recherche (FNR) in Luxembourg on collaboration with Luxembourg researchers in ZonMw Open Competition projects. Researchers from Luxembourg involved in a ZonMw Open Competition application with a Luxembourg component must meet the conditions of the FNR INTER programme (<https://www.fnr.lu/funding-instruments/inter/>) and are requested to contact the FNR well before the deadline. ZonMw assesses an application in its entirety, as being a regular ZonMw Open Competition application and in coordination with the FNR. Please contact ZonMw if you are considering submitting an application with a Luxembourg component or would like more information. Further information can be found at <https://www.fnr.lu/international-cooperation/nwo-zon-mw/> and in Module 5B Internationalisation (p. 27).

COLLABORATION WITH ZONMW PROGRAMME DEMENTIA RESEARCH PROGRAMME

ZonMw has reached agreements with the Dementia Research Programme (OPD) on applications that focus thematically on the subject of dementia. Above all, an application must meet the objective and regular conditions of ZonMw Open Competition as described in this Call for proposals. An application is eligible if it also fits within one of the following OPD themes: work package 1 'Fundamental research', work package 2 'Risk reduction', work package 3 'Diagnostics (and prognostics)' and work package 5 'Young people with dementia'.

ZonMw will assess these applications as being regular ZonMw Open Competition applications. In any case, the highest-priority application, which focuses on dementia and meets the assessment criteria in this Call for proposals, will be funded from the OPD budget. The remaining applications will go through the regular procedure of prioritization and awarding.

3.3 PREPARING AND SUBMITTING THE APPLICATION

An application consists of an online application form and a number of forms to be prepared offline and uploaded as attachments in the online application system. To prepare your application, go through the following steps:

- Download the application form and other relevant forms from the ZonMw website (*at the bottom of the relevant funding instrument page or from the My ZonMw online application system*);
- Complete all forms in the English language;
- Save the application form and any attachments as pdf files and upload them in *My ZonMw*;
- Complete the requested data online in *My ZonMw*.

Attachments should be in accordance with the template offered by ZonMw. Attachments should be uploaded separately from the application. All attachments should be submitted as a pdf file (without security). Attachments other than those listed are not permitted.

For each application submitted, ZonMw assumes that the applicant has informed its research organization and that the university or institute accepts the grant conditions of this programme.

ADVICE ON CHOICE OF DOMAIN

For this Call for proposals the application must fit within the domain of ZonMw. You should therefore consider in good time whether the content of the application fits. If in doubt, for example because the application has a (partly) trans-domain character, contact the program office well before the deadline. They can advise on the substantive fit of the application to this Call. However, the final decision on submission is up to the applicant. For contact information, see section 7.1.

3.4 FORMAL SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS

ZonMw will assess each application against the conditions listed below. Only if the application meets these conditions, it will be admitted to the assessment procedure. The main applicant is asked to be available after submission of an application to make any necessary administrative corrections to (still) be able to meet the submission conditions.

These conditions are:

- the main applicant and co-applicant(s) meet the conditions stated in Section 3.1;
- the application complies with the DORA guidelines as described in Section 4.1;
- the application form is, after any request for additions or amendments, complete and filled out according to the instructions;
- the application is submitted via the main applicant's *My ZonMw* account;
- the application is received before the set deadline;
- the application is written in English;
- the application budget has been prepared according to the terms of this Call for proposals;
- the proposed project has a duration of minimum 48 and maximum 60 months;
- all required annexes are, after any possible request for additions or amendments, complete and according to the instructions of this Call for proposals.

3.5 GRANTING CONDITIONS

The [NWO Grant Rules 2017](#) and the [Approval of funding for scientific research 2008](#) apply to all proposals. Accordingly, awarded projects should start within six months from the date of the grant award decision.

COMPLIANCE WITH THE NATIONAL KNOWLEDGE SECURITY GUIDELINES

World-class science can benefit from international cooperation. The National Knowledge Security Guidelines (hereafter: the Guidelines) helps knowledge institutions to ensure that international cooperation can take place securely. Knowledge security concerns the undesirable transfer of sensitive knowledge and technology that compromises national security; the covert influence of state actors on education and research, which jeopardises academic freedom and social safety; and ethical issues that may arise in cooperation with countries that do not respect fundamental rights.

Applicants are responsible for ensuring that their project complies and will continue to comply with the Guidelines. By submitting an application, the applicant commits to the recommendations stipulated in these Guidelines. In the event of a suspected breach of the Guidelines in an application submitted to NWO for project funding, or in a project funded by NWO, NWO may ask the applicant to provide a risk assessment demonstrating that the recommendations in the Guidelines have been taken into consideration. If the applicant fails to comply with NWO's request, or if the risk assessment is in apparent breach of the Guidelines, this may affect NWO's grant award or decision-making process. NWO may also include further conditions in the award letter if appropriate.

The National Knowledge Security Guidelines can be found on the central government website at: [Home | National Contact Point for Knowledge Security \(loketkennisveiligheid.nl\)](#).

DATA MANAGEMENT – ACCESS TO DATA

Results of scientific research must be able to be replicated, verified and falsified. In the digital age, this means that in addition to publications, research data should also be made as freely accessible as possible. ZonMw expects that the research data which emerge from projects funded by ZonMw are made freely available as much as possible for reuse by other researchers. ZonMw applies the principle: "as open as possible, protected if necessary". Researchers are expected to at least make those data and/or non-numerical results that underlie the conclusions of works published within the project available, simultaneously with the publication itself. Any costs associated with this can be included in the project budget. Researchers state how data emerging from the project will be dealt with in a data management section in the full proposal, and the data management plan after funding has been awarded.

Data management section

The data management section is part of the application. Researchers are asked before the start of the research to consider how the data collected will be ordered and categorised so that this can be made publicly available. Measures will often have to be taken already before the data are created and analysed to enable later storage and sharing of these data. If not all data resulting from the project can be made public, for example for reasons of privacy, ethics or valorisation, the applicant must list the reasons for this in the data management section.

The data management section in the proposal is not assessed and therefore will not be weighed in the decision whether or not to award funding. However, both the referees and the committee can provide advice regarding the data management section.

SCIENTIFIC INTEGRITY

ZonMw and NWO have included in the grant rules that all research funded by ZonMw and NWO must be conducted in accordance with the nationally and internationally accepted standards of scientific conduct as laid down in the Netherlands Code of Conduct for Scientific Integrity (2018). By submitting an application, the applicant commits to this code. In the event of a (possible) violation of the aforementioned standards in an NWO-funded research project, the applicant must immediately inform NWO and submit all relevant documents to NWO. Further information about the NWO policy on scientific integrity can be found on the website: <https://www.nwo.nl/en/scientific-integrity>.

ETHICAL STATEMENT OF LICENCE

It is the responsibility of the applicant to ascertain whether an ethics statement or licence is required for the execution of the proposed project. The applicant should ensure that it is obtained in a timely manner from the relevant institution or ethics committee. If a project is awarded funding, the grant is subject to the condition that the necessary ethics certificate or licence is obtained before the project start date. The project can only start after ZonMw receives a copy of the ethics statement or licence.

NAGOYA PROTOCOL

The Nagoya Protocol became effective on 12 October 2014 and ensures an honest and reasonable distribution of benefits emerging from the use of genetic resources (*Access and Benefit Sharing; ABS*). Researchers who make use of genetic sources from the Netherlands or abroad for their research should familiarise themselves with the Nagoya Protocol ([ABS Focal Point](#)). ZonMw assumes that researchers will take all necessary actions with respect to the Nagoya Protocol.

ANIMAL EXPERIMENTAL RESEARCH

ZonMw endorses the [Code for Transparency in Animal Testing](#) and the [Biosecurity Code](#). Applicants should endorse and comply with the existing codes. If the application concerns animal experimental research, then the use of the [ARRIVE](#) guidelines is mandatory. The use of this guideline should be clearly motivated in the plan of approach. The ARRIVE guideline is intended as a guideline for publications but can also be used as a guideline for conditions for good animal experimental research (for example, randomization, blinding, good statistical and methodological substantiation etc.). This guideline can be found on the website of the [Equator Network](#). You can also look at the websites of Experimental design assistant ([EDA](#)) and [PREPARE](#).

COFINANCING

Co-financing is possible for applications in this Call for proposals. When using the investment module (with a minimum 25% of the total amount requested for the module), co-financing is compulsory. In all cases the research institute and/or a third party should enclose a Co-financing Statement signed by an authorised representative of the co-financing party when submitting the detailed application (i.e. not yet with the project idea). It is important that this party explicitly commits the amount of the contribution in this form. The collection of the co-financing is done through the organisation of the applicant/project leader. Co-financing declarations are unconditional and do not contain dissolving clauses. A mandatory format for the co-financing statement can be found on the funding page of this instrument. Co-financing statements will not be forwarded to committee members and will not be assessed.

4 ASSESSMENT PROCEDURE

This chapter first describes the assessment according to the DORA principles and how the assessment procedure works (section 4.1). The criteria on which the assessment committee will assess your application are discussed in chapter 5.

The [‘NWO Code for Dealing with Personal Interests’](#) applies to all persons and ZonMw employees involved in the assessment and/or decision-taking process.

ZonMw and NWO strive for an inclusive culture, in which there is no room for conscious or unconscious barriers due to cultural, ethnic or religious background, gender, sexual orientation, health or age (<https://www.nwo.nl/en/diversity-and-inclusion>). NWO and ZonMw actively encourage referees and members of an assessment committee/jury to become aware of implicit associations and try to minimise them. NWO and ZonMw provide them with information on concrete ways to improve the assessment of an application.

SAN FRANCISCO DECLARATION (DORA)

ZonMw is a signatory to the San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA). DORA is a worldwide initiative that aims to improve the way research and researchers are assessed. DORA contains recommendations for research funders, research institutions, scientific journals and other parties.

DORA aims to reduce the uncritical use of bibliometric indicators and obviate unconscious bias in the assessment of research and researchers. DORA’s overarching philosophy is that research should be evaluated on its own merits rather than on the basis of surrogate measures, such as the journal in which the research is published.

When assessing the scientific track record of applicants, ZonMw makes use of a broad definition of scientific output.

ZonMw requests committee members and referees not to rely on indicators such as the Journal Impact Factor or the h-index when assessing applications. Applicants are not allowed to mention these in their applications. You are, however, allowed to list other scientific products besides publications, such as datasets, patents, software and code, et cetera.

For more information on how ZonMw and NWO are implementing the principles of DORA, see [DORA | NWO](#).

4.1 PROCEDURE

For this Call for proposals, the ZonMw board has appointed an external, independent assessment committee from different (bio)medical disciplines. The task of the assessment committee is to assess the submitted applications and related documents in relation to each other and on their own merits, based on the assessment criteria given in this Call.

A standard application form is available on the funding page of this Call for proposals on the ZonMw website and in *My ZonMw*. In your application, you must comply with the questions in this form and the working method in the notes. You must also comply with the conditions for the maximum number of words and pages.

All submitted applications are in competition with each other. The assessment takes place in two steps:

STEP 1: PROJECT IDEA

ZonMw Open Competition operates with a mandatory project idea (pre-proposal). This is a shortened version of the project proposal. The completed project idea must be received via My ZonMw before the deadline. The main applicant will receive a confirmation of receipt after submission of the pre-proposal.

CONSIDERATION OF THE PROJECT IDEA

The first step in the assessment procedure is to check whether the project idea can be accepted. ZonMw determines this on the basis of a number of administrative-technical criteria (see the formal conditions for submission, section 3.4). Only if the project idea meets these criteria, it can be considered by ZonMw.

Please note that ZonMw may approach the main applicant within two weeks after the submission deadline to make any administrative corrections to (still) meet the conditions for submission. **You will be given one opportunity to make the corrections, for which you will have five working days.**

Adjusted project ideas that are received in time by ZonMw and meet the submission conditions will be considered for assessment.

ASSESSMENT OF THE PROJECT IDEA

The selection committee assesses and ranks the project ideas numerically based on the relevance and quality criteria for the ZonMw Open Competition as described in this Call for proposals (see section 5.1 and 5.2). A numerical score will be given for each assessment criteria based on the NWO scoring table (on a scale of 1 to 9, where '1' is excellent and '9' is insufficient).

ADVICE PROJECT IDEA

The outcome of the project round is an advice: ZonMw invites the most promising applicants to submit a detailed application and discourages the remaining applicants from doing so. The number of applicants to be invited is determined by the available budget. As a guideline, about two to three times as many applications are invited to submit a full proposal as can eventually be awarded.

If you want to submit a full proposal despite a negative advice, please contact the programme secretariat as soon as possible due to the technical support in *My ZonMw*.

STEP 2: PROCEDURE FULL PROPOSAL

The completed application should be an elaboration of the assessed project idea; significant changes to the research design and research team are therefore not allowed. The fully completed application form must be received via *My ZonMw* before the deadline. You cannot submit an application after this time. The main applicant will receive confirmation of receipt once the application has been submitted.

PROCESSING FULL PROPOSALS

ZonMw will again determine whether the full application can be processed on the basis of a number of administrative-technical criteria (see section 3.4). This is only possible if your application meets all the criteria and conditions.

Please note that ZonMw may approach the main applicant within two weeks of the submission deadline to make any administrative corrections to (still) meet the submission conditions. **You will have one opportunity to make the corrections; you will have five working days to do so.**

Adjusted full applications that are received in time by ZonMw and meet the submission requirements will be considered.

PEER REVIEW BY REFEREES

Before the selection committee considers the full proposal, ZonMw first asks for input from at least two external referees. These are independent advisors who are experts in the subject of the application. They will assess the application based on the assessment criteria set out in this Call for proposals (chapter 5).

It is possible to specify (up to three) non-referees. Applicants can submit these non-referees *in My ZonMw*, at the same time as submitting the project idea. ZonMw will not approach these non-referees to assess the application as external referees.

REBUTTAL

The main applicant will receive anonymised referee reports. The research team then has the opportunity to formulate a rebuttal. The main applicant will be notified of the exact deadline and period of the rebuttal. The main applicant will be given ten working days to submit the rebuttal via *My ZonMw*. If the research team decides to withdraw the application, the main applicant must notify the agency by e-mail as soon as possible and withdraw the application in *My ZonMw*. If ZonMw receives your rebuttal after the deadline, it will not be included in the further procedure.

PRE-ADVICE OF THE COMMITTEE

The application, the referees' reports and the rebuttal will be assessed by a number of members of the assessment committee (the pre-advisors). The pre-advisors provide substantive and reasoned comments on the application in writing. The committee weighs the arguments of the referees (also among themselves) and examines whether the rebuttal contains a substantively sound response to the critical remarks from the referees' reports. In this case, the referees' reports are to a large extent indicative of the final assessment, but the assessment committee independently forms an opinion on the application. They formulate their assessment based on the substantive assessment criteria (chapter 5) and give the application a numerical score for each assessment criterion based on the NWO scoring table (on a scale of 1 to 9, where '1' is excellent and '9' is insufficient).

INTERVIEWSELECTION

The applications, the referee reports and the rebuttal will be submitted to the assessment committee. Based on this, the assessment committee makes its own assessment that results in a prioritization.

During the interview selection meeting, the selection committee makes a recommendation on which applications are eligible for the category 'highest priority applications'. These applications must at least meet the following criteria:

- Minimum qualification of '*relevant*' (score 1.4 or lower)
- Minimum average qualification of '*excellent to very good*' for quality (score of 2.2 or lower)
- Minimum average qualification of '*very good*' for methodology and investment module (if requested; score of 3.4 or lower)
- Positive advice from at least three pre-advisors of the assessment committee

DECISION CATEGORY 'HIGHEST RANKING APPLICATIONS'

The group of applications belonging to the 'highest ranking applications' category are eligible for direct awarding of funding without an interview. The ZonMw board reviews the followed procedure and the advice of the assessment committee. The ZonMw board then establishes the final qualifications and decides on whether to grant applications that belong to this category.

INTERVIEW

During the interview, the assessment committee has the opportunity to ask questions, including new questions not yet raised by the referees. A delegation of members of the research team can respond to these questions during the interview with the assessment committee. In this way, further adversarial procedure is conducted. The interview is an important part of the assessment and can lead to adjustment of the assessment and the score of the application up to that point.

PRIORITIZATION

The selection committee uses the motivation of the referees, the applicants' rebuttal and the interview to reach an independent judgement of the assessment criteria of the application. The selection committee forms an allocation and rejection recommendation with advice to the ZonMw Domain Board on the relevance, quality and prioritisation of the applications. The application as a whole must at least get the rating "relevant" and average rating "very good" for quality. Each of the individual sub-criteria must be rated at least as 'very good'. The methodology and investment module sections (if applicable) should also get a minimum qualification of "very good".

EX AEQUO

By *ex aequo*, NWO means the situation where two or more applications are indistinguishable from each other based on their weighted score. An *ex aequo* situation is relevant around the limit of the grant ceiling. Whether an *ex aequo* situation exists is determined as follows. The starting point is the prioritisation drawn up by the assessment committee, with final scores rounded to 2 decimals. The reference score is the score of the lowest prioritised application within the limit of the grant ceiling or the selection limit. All applications with a score that deviates of 0.05 or less from the reference score will be considered. In this way, applications that are within a range of 0.10 from the reference score are considered.

If an *ex aequo* situation occurs at the limit of the grant ceiling, the application with a GzW will be given priority to encourage GzW research. If this does not break the *ex aequo* situation, the application of a female main applicant will finish highest, to stimulate the proportion of women in science. If the *ex aequo* remains, the application with the highest partial score on the sub-criterion 'quality of research' will prevail. If thereafter applications finish equal, the assessment committee determines the prioritisation by means of an (anonymous) majority vote (in accordance with Article 2.2.7, third paragraph, subsection a, part IV of the [NWO Grant Rules 2017](#)).

DECISION

Finally, the ZonMw Domain Board assesses the procedure followed and the advice of the assessment committee. It then determines the final qualifications and decides on whether to grant and reject the applications.

Each main applicant will be informed of the results via a letter and will receive the qualification of the assessment and a report with a justification for each (main) assessment criterion. A main applicant can submit an objection to the ZonMw board within six weeks of the date of the decision.

4.2 PROVISIONAL TIMETABLE

Deadline submission of documents for review of applicants' organisation	1 April 2024
Deadline submission of project idea	18 April, 14.00 hr CEST
Result committee advice	Start of July 2024
<i>My ZonMw</i> open for submission of full proposal	Start of July 2024
Deadline submission of full proposal	12 September 2024, 14.00 hr CEST
Consulting referees	October to beginning of November 2024
Deadline submission of rebuttal	Mid to end of November 2024
Result of interview selection and decision on category 'highest ranking applications'	End of January 2025
Interview (physical meeting, Utrecht)	12 & 13 February 2025
Decision ZonMw and receipt of results	Start of April 2024

It could be possible that ZonMw considers it necessary to make adjustments to the timeline during the current selection procedure of ZonMw Open Competition 2024. Any changes to the procedure of this round will be published on the website and in the Government Gazette. Therefore, please consult the ZonMw website regularly for the latest situation.

5 SUBSTANTIVE ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

The applications submitted within this Call for proposals will be assessed on the basis of the criteria for relevance and quality (sections 5.1 and 5.2).

5.1 RELEVANCE

The relevance of an application for the ZonMw Open Competition is determined by the assessment committee. The aim of this criterion is to select the pre-proposals that best fit the aims of the Call for proposals as describes in section 2:

- Innovative (groundbreaking) fundamental biomedical or health science with a broad influence on science and/or society;
- Team science: synergistic and creative collaboration between research groups, innovative in composition and content (see section 2.2); evidenced by the fact that the members of the team have not previously collaborated or published jointly on the topic described.

5.2 QUALITY

In addition to the criterion of relevance, the quality of an application is weighted in the assessment of the following three criteria as follows:

- 6 Project idea:
 - A. Scientific quality (60%);
 - B. Quality of the project team (40%);
- 7 Full proposal:
 - A. Scientific quality (50%);
 - B. Quality of the project team (30%);
 - C. Knowledge utilisation and participation (20%).

In addition, the components *Methodology* and *Investment Module* of the full application must be assessed as at least 'good' in order to be eligible for awarding. These scores will not be taken into account in the average of the final quality score.

A. Scientific quality (What)

- High innovative value in terms of scientific content;
- Original research question with the potential to make a groundbreaking contribution to science;
- Integrates all perspectives relevant to the central research question. The potential of the project as a whole clearly exceeds the sum of its parts;
- The research project is focused, optimally cohesive, with an effective plan of approach;
- Effective and solid methodology (see page 17);
- Feasibility, risk analysis and backup plan.

B. Quality of the project team (Who)

- The team includes researchers with a strong (inter)national scientific position. These expert and innovative researchers are able to make a profound and unique contribution to the development of their field(s);
- The composition of the research team, at group and individual level, and the expertise involved are ideally suited to carry out the proposed research project;
- The composition of the team is synergistic: the expertise of the various project members is complementary and supplementary;

- The team's main applicant has proven skills in leading and inspiring teams and collaborations, and forms a well-balanced team with the other team members;
- The composition of the team is optimal and tailored to the content and execution of the proposed research project, with sufficient attention to the individual roles in research as well as management, education/training and knowledge utilisation. Specific attention is requested for inclusivity, for example with respect to level of seniority, gender and ethnic diversity.

C. Knowledge utilisation and participation (Why)

Knowledge utilisation is about sharing or further developing knowledge in consultation with researchers from the researchers' own discipline or from other disciplines, stakeholders and/or (end) users. ZonMw also encourages the early involvement (participation) of stakeholders, if possible, including the end target group or end users who have expertise through experience. Since knowledge utilisation and participation takes many different forms, it is up to the applicant to specify which aims are relevant, which strategy fits them, and what approach and resources are needed to do so. However, ZonMw is also aware that knowledge utilisation does not apply to all research results. If an applicant can plausibly justify why knowledge utilisation does not play a role, this is also possible - if properly justified. In view of the programme objectives, three focal points are relevant:

- 1) Knowledge utilisation and participation in science, widely projecting. This includes the following criteria:
 - Engaging, informing and integrating new knowledge, results and insights from various scientific disciplines, both nationally and internationally;
 - Participation to stimulate research creativity and strengthen quality;
 - Possibilities for dissemination via Open Science strategies;
 - Sharing knowledge gained from the investment module (if applicable).

- 2) Knowledge utilisation and participation to facilitate innovation development and valorisation. This includes the following criteria:
 - A clear vision with concrete and feasible plans for the potential impact, applications and further development in areas both within as well as outside science, even if this is a longer term perspective;
 - Exploring opportunities for valorisation.

- 3) Knowledge utilisation and participation aimed at the practice, education, policy, industry and society in general. This includes the following criteria:
 - Informing and implementing knowledge and results with involved and relevant parties for the project such as, for example:
 - a. patients and practitioners organisations and professionals;
 - b. policy and education;
 - c. cultural institutions;
 - d. industry;
 - e. citizens as a broad group with possible focus on certain focus groups.

METHODOLOGY

In the assessment of the methodology, a description of the following criteria plays an important role:

- The type of research - e.g. qualitative and/or quantitative research;
- Core components of the study design;
- Power calculation (where applicable) including statistical methods and substantiation, theoretical and/or empirical arguments;
- The data characteristics - including inclusion and exclusion criteria, potential bias and confounders;
- Method of data collection and outcome measures;
- Data analysis and (statistical) tools used;
- The validity, reliability (accuracy) and reproducibility of the applied methodology / techniques to answer the research questions.
- A clear description of how sex, gender and diversity (ethnicity, age, socioeconomic status, and sexual orientation) will be taken into account in the design, implementation, analysis, and reporting of results. If certain aspects of diversity are not relevant for the proposed research or if it is not practically possible to consider differences between subgroups, this must be clearly substantiated.

Refer to the reporting standards of the relevant discipline(s) to rigorously describe the methodology. Existing reporting guidelines can be used as inspiration to tailor this section to the needs of your proposal: <https://www.equator-network.org/reporting-guidelines/>. In addition, the [SAGER guidelines](#) can be consulted as inspiration for integrating sex and gender into the action plan. The [ZonMw website](#) also contains information about sex, gender and diversity in research.

INVESTMENT MODULE (OPTIONAL)

The Investment module is a funding for setting up a medium-sized infrastructure. An application is only eligible for funding if there is a clear scientific interest and at least local and, where possible, national support is present (for example, through co-use by researchers from other institutions). For the assessment, the criteria below play an important role:

Scientific quality

- importance, urgency and innovation of the investment for the application and for the research field concerned;
- technological innovation;
- technical feasibility and effectiveness of the investment;
- quality and competence project group with respect to the investment module.

Local and national importance

- potential impact of local and national importance;
- accessibility (also in the longer term) for researchers other than the applicants directly involved and the scheme concerned;
- alignment with other groups in the field concerned;
- embedding of the investment in the (longer term) research strategy of the institution.

Financial/technical aspects

- the degree of co-financing and the relationship to the size and objectives of the project;
- the need for personnel (both requested in grant application and paid out of own budget);
- insurance for accommodation of the investment;
- embedding of the investment in a satisfactory setting within the institution;
- management and exploitation plan for the investment;

- risk analysis including proposal for possible solutions.

Effectiveness of the investment

- ratio size of the investment and the number of users/the use;
- the expected utilisation rate of the investment;
- continuity of the investment after the granting period;
- future plan for replacement/modernisation.

Knowledge utilisation/participation: potential and implementation

- extent to which the realisation of the investment will contribute to (technological) innovation at companies or in society;
- extent to which the results obtained with the investment will contribute to important scientific, technological or societal developments;
- action plan to ensure that outcomes that emerge from the use of the facility will benefit potential knowledge users;
- extent to which potential knowledge users are involved in the design, realisation and use of the facility and, if so, how does this happen?
- the expected period for possible knowledge utilisation and participation.

This chapter explains the various grant obligations that - in addition to the grant conditions mentioned in section 3.5 - apply after funding has been awarded.

DATAMANAGEMENT – ACCESS TO DATA

Data management plan

After a proposal has been awarded funding, the applicant should elaborate the data management section into a data management plan. Applicants can make use of the advice given by the referees and committee. In the plan, the applicant describes whether existing data will be used or whether new data will be collected and how this collection will be made **FAIR**: Findable, Accessible, Interoperable, Reusable. The data management plan must be coordinated prior to submission with a data steward or similar officer from the institution where the project will be carried out. The plan must be submitted to ZonMw within a maximum of four months after the proposal was awarded funding. ZonMw will assess the plans as quickly as possible. Approval of the data management plan by ZonMw is a condition for disbursement of the funding. The plan can be adjusted in the course of the project. Further information about the data management plan of now can be found at: <https://www.nwo.nl/en/research-data-management>.

INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY

With regard to intellectual property (IP), the NWO IP policy applies. The NWO IP policy can be found in Chapter 4 of the [NWO Grant Scheme 2017](#).

Applicants must carry out an NWO-funded project during the time they work for the knowledge institution. If an applicant or NWO-funded researcher is employed by multiple employers, the other employer must waive any IP rights arising from the project for the benefit of the applicant. For further questions, please contact the IP/contract specialist who often works in your organisation's legal department or valorisation department or technology transfer office (TTO).

CONSORTIUM- OR SPONSORSHIP AGREEMENT

For an application in the ZonMw Open Competition round, it is a prerequisite to enter into collaboration with several parties. These parties may also contribute financially to the project. The mutual agreements with these partners must be laid down in a consortium or sponsorship agreement.

ZonMw will assess a final draft version (approved by the parties but not yet signed) of the consortium or sponsorship agreement for compliance with, at least, EU law on state aid, the NWO Grant Rules 2017 and the conditions in this call for proposals. ZonMw itself does not sign the agreement. The project can only start after this agreement has been approved by ZonMw.

In the application form you should describe:

- Who is the legal owner of the contributed existing knowledge (background intellectual property). Knowledge resulting from funded research must remain the property of the knowledge institution at all times;
- possible personal interests of applicants in companies included in the consortium, or parties outside the consortium but contracted for work;
- material within the research that is subject to restrictions or confidentiality;
- whether there are any patents (or patent applications) that might impede knowledge utilisation.

The financial commitment of any co-financers must be recorded in a signed agreement as well (the sponsorship agreement). If ZonMw does not accept the consortium agreement and/or sponsorship agreement (proof of co-financing), no grant may be awarded.

For advice on drawing up a consortium and/or sponsorship agreement, contact your organisation's TTO office. Involve these advisers as early as possible in your prepared application.

On the ZonMw webpage [Grants and Collaborations/contributions from third parties | ZonMw](#) you will find more information on the different types of collaboration along with agreement templates as an aid for drawing up the relevant agreement and conditions that the agreement must meet.

NWO's (model) consortium agreement will be made available to awarded applications. This model agreement has been prepared in accordance with the NWO Grant Scheme 2017.

SOCIALLY RESPONSIBLE LICENSING

The project may generate knowledge suitable for application in society. When entering into agreements on the licensing and/or transfer of research results generated through this Call for proposals, the ten principles for socially responsible licensing should be taken into account, as outlined in the NFU report "[Ten principles for Socially Responsible Licensing](#)".

OPEN ACCESS

As a signatory to the Berlin Declaration on Open Access to Knowledge in the Sciences and Humanities (2003), ZonMw and NWO strive to ensure that the results of scientific research that emerge from funding from NWO or ZonMw are made freely available via internet (Open Access). By doing so, ZonMw implements the policy of the Dutch government to make all publicly funded research available in open access form. Scientific publications of research funded on the basis of grants emerging from this Call for proposals should therefore be made available in Open Access form according to the Open Access policy rule.

Scientific articles

Scientific articles must be made available Open Access immediately at the time of publication (without embargo) via one of the following routes:

- publication in a fully open access journal or platform registered in the DOAJ;
- publication in a subscription journal and depositing at least the author's version of the article in an Open Access repository registered in OpenDOAR;
- publication in a journal for which a transformative Open Access agreement is available between *Universities of the Netherlands* and a publisher. More on this, see: [Open Access](#)

Books

Different conditions apply to books, book chapters and collections. See the Open Access Policy Rule on this subject at [Open Science | NWO](#).

CC BY licence

In order to ensure optimal distribution of publications, at least a Creative Commons (CC BY) license must be applied. In the event of compelling interests, the author may request to publish under the application of a CC BY-ND licence. For books, collections and book chapters, you are free to choose a CC BY licence.

Costs

Any costs for publishing in fully Open Access journals can be budgeted in the project budget by using the 'material credit' module. Costs for publications in hybrid journals are not eligible for funding by NWO. For Open Access books, the separate [Open Access book fund](#) can be used. For a further explanation of NWO's open access policy, see: <https://www.nwo.nl/en/open-science>.

7 CONTACT AND OTHER INFORMATION

7.1 CONTACT

SPECIFIC QUESTIONS

The most recent information about the current round can be found on the website of the [ZonMw Open Competition](#). A document with answers to frequently asked questions (FAQ) can be found there too, which you are advised to consult before contacting ZonMw.

For specific questions about this call you can contact the program team via e-mail opencompetitie@zonmw.nl or via phone: +31 (0)70 349 50 50.

TECHNICAL QUESTIONS ABOUT THE ELECTRONIC APPLICATION SYSTEM

For technical questions about the use of *Mijn ZonMw* please contact the ZonMw service desk. Please consult [the manual](#) before seeking advice from the Service desk. The service desk can be contacted from Monday to Friday between 9.00- and 17.00-hours CEST on +31 (0)70 349 51 76. You can also submit your question by e-mail to servicedesk@zonmw.nl.

OTHER

ZonMw processes personal data received in the context of this round in accordance with the ZonMw privacy statement. For more information see <https://www.zonmw.nl/nl/over-zonmw/privacy/>.

ZonMw and NWO may be able to approach applicants for an evaluation of the procedure and/or the research programme.

EXPLANATION OF THE BUDGET MODULES

In this call, the modules Personnel (1), Material credit (2) and Knowledge Utilisation (4) are **mandatory** to include in the budget, and can be applied for as often as is necessary for the intended research; as long as this amount is within the maximum grant that can be applied for. The modules Investments (3) and Internationalisation (5) are *optional*

All components of the budget must be proportionate to the research, and to be justified in the research proposal. Draw up this budget together with a financial controller from the applicant institute.

MODULE PERSONNEL (MANDATORY)

It is possible to apply for the funding of the salary costs of personnel who make a substantial contribution to the research. Funding of these salary costs depends on the type of appointment and the organisation where the personnel are/ will be appointed.

- For university appointments, the salary costs are funded in accordance with the UNL salary tables applicable at the moment the grant is awarded (Salary tables | NWO) (www.nwo.nl/en/salary-tables);
- For university medical centres, the salary costs are funded in accordance with the NFU salary tables applicable at the moment the grant is awarded (www.nwo.nl/en/salary-tables);
- For personnel from universities of applied sciences, educational institutions and other organisations, salary costs will be funded based on the collective labour agreement pay scale of the employee concerned in accordance with the applicable rate at the time of awarding the grant as taken from Table 2.2, column 'Hourly rate productive hours, excl. Dutch VAT' from the *Handleiding Overheidstarieven* [HOT- Manual Dutch Government Rates] ([Salary tables | NWO](http://www.nwo.nl/en/salary-tables)).
- For the Caribbean Netherlands, the Dutch government employs civil servants on Bonaire, Sint Eustatius and Saba under different conditions than in the European part of the Netherlands ([Employment terms and conditions | Working at the Rijksdienst Caribisch Nederland | Rijksdienst Caribisch Nederland \(rijksdienstcn.com\)](http://www.rijksoverheid.nl/onderwerpen/caribisch-nederland/overheidsdienst)).

NWO will apply a mandatory one-off indexing of the salary costs⁸ with respect to:

- UNL rates: for proposals submitted before 1 July and that are awarded funding after 1 July;
- NFU rates: for proposals submitted before 1 August that are awarded funding after 1 August;
- HOT rates: for proposals submitted before 1 January that are awarded funding after 1 January.

The mandatory one-off indexing has no influence on the level of the grant ceiling or on the maximum amount of the grant awarded per proposal. The level of the grant ceiling and the maximum amount of the grant awarded will remain unchanged during the assessment procedure. The mandatory one-off indexing will be applied after the decision-taking about awarding or rejecting proposals has been completed.

If co-funding is required or permitted then the one-off mandatory indexing will have no consequences for the co-funding requirement or the IP rights that can emerge from the co-funding.

Remunerations for PhD scholarship students ('bursalen') at a Dutch university are not eligible for funding from NWO. The available budget modules are explained below.

⁸ The dates of 1 July, 1 August and 1 January, respectively, are the dates on which the relevant tariffs are generally adjusted, indexation is based on the date of actual annual adjustment.

BENCH FEE

For each project employee funded by ZonMw from module 1a and/or 1b, there is a *mandatory* one-time individual bench fee of € 5,000 on top of the salary and material costs, to encourage the scientific career of the project employee concerned.

MODULE 1A PERSONNEL PHD CANDIDATE (INCLUDING MD-PHD)

A PhD candidate should be appointed for 48 months for 1.0 FTE or for an equivalent, such as 0.8 FTE for 60 months. If for the realisation of the proposed research a different appointment period is required, then this can be done as long as it is suitable within the overall duration of the project *and* as long as the reasons are clearly justified. However, the appointment duration must always be at least 48 months at 1.0 FTE.

MODULE 1B PERSONNEL POSTDOC

A postdoc should be appointed for a duration of a minimum of 6 full-time months and a maximum of 48 full-time months. The deployment can be arranged as seen fit but is always at least 0.5 FTE or a duration of at least 12 months. The total sum of FTE x duration in months must always be at least 6 full-time months. The material credit can be used to cover a limited deployment of a postdoc's expertise.

MODULE 1C PROFESSIONAL DOCTORATE IN ENGINEERING (PDENG)

Funding for the appointment of a PDEng can only be applied for if funding for a PhD student or Postdoc is *also* applied for.

A PDEng should be appointed for a duration of maximum 1,0 FTE for 24 months. The PDEng trainee is employed by the applying institution and may carry out work within the research at an industry partner for a fixed period of time. If the research proposal is awarded, an agreement must be concluded with the industry partner(s) concerned. The grant application should describe the underlying 'Technological Designer Programme'.

MODULE 1D NON-SCIENTIFIC PERSONNEL (NSP) AT UNIVERSITIES

Per PhD candidate or postdoc, up to € 100,000 can be applied for in NSP. The following conditions apply:

Funding for the appointment of non-academic staff that is necessary for the implementation of the research project can only be applied for if funding for a PhD candidate or postdoc is also requested (Module 1A and/or 1B). The NSP can concern student assistants, programmers, technical assistants or analysts. Depending on the job level, a choice can be made from the salary tables *NSP MBO*, *NSP HBO* and *NSP Academic*. The appointment of the position should be for a duration of a minimum of 6 full-time months and a maximum of 48 full-time months. The deployment can be arranged as seen fit but is always at least 0.5 FTE or the duration is at least 12 months. The total sum of FTE x duration in months must always be at least 6 full-time months. The material credit can be used to cover the costs of deploying non-scientific personnel for a shorter period of time.

MODULE 1F OTHER SCIENTIFIC PERSONNEL (OSP) AT UNIVERSITIES

Per PhD candidate or postdoc, up to € 100,000 can be applied for in OSP. The following conditions apply:

Funding for other scientific personnel such as AIOS (doctor training to be a specialist), ANIOS (doctor not training to be a specialist), or people with a master's degree or "drs" or "ir" qualification, (e.g. data scientist, methodologist) can only be requested in combination with a PhD candidate or Postdoc (module 1a and/or 1b). The appointment at 1 FTE is for a maximum of 48 months and, in the case of part-time

work, for a maximum of 60 months. The minimum size of the appointment is 0.5 FTE for a period of 12 months. This deployment can be spread over a longer or shorter period, for example across the entire duration of the project. The total sum of FTE x duration in months must always be at least 6 full-time months.

MODULE 1G RESEARCH LEAVE FOR APPLICANTS

In this call, each applicant or co-applicant can request the module research leave for applicants once, up to a maximum of three research leave positions per application. This module applies only to applicants based in the Netherlands. For each research leave position the following conditions apply:

With this budget module, funding can be requested for the research leave costs of the main and/or co-applicant(s). The employer of the applicant concerned can use this to cover the costs of relinquishing him or her from clinical, educational, supervisory, administrative or management tasks (not research tasks). The time that is released through the research leave grant can only be used by the applicant(s) for activities in the context of the project. The proposal must describe which activities in the context of the project the applicant(s) will carry out in the time relinquished. The maximum amount of research leave that can be applied for is the equivalent of five full-time months. ZonMw funds the research leave in accordance with the salary tables (<https://www.nwo.nl/en/salary-tables>) for a senior scientific employee (scale 11) at the time the grant is awarded.

MODULE 1H STAFF COLLEGES, EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS AND OTHER ORGANISATIONS

Costs up to a maximum of € 100,000 for the financing of staff employed at a university of applied sciences, educational institutions (with the exception of staff covered by UNL or NFU) or other organisations will be reimbursed in accordance with Table 2.2, column 'Hourly rate for productive hours, excl. VAT' of the Government Tariffs Manual. ([Salary tables | NWO](#)).

The calculation should be based on the number of productive hours mentioned in the current volume of the Government Rates Manual.

2. MODULE MATERIAL CREDIT (MANDATORY)

Per full-time scientific position applied for (modules 1a, 1b and/or 1c), you can apply for a maximum of € 20,000 material credit per year of the appointment. Material credit for smaller appointments can be applied for on a proportionate basis. A maximum of € 20,000 material budget can be requested per 0.2 FTE requested by a scientific staff member at a university of applied sciences, educational institution or other organisation (with a minimum appointment of 0.2 FTE for 12 months). The total amount of material credit can be spread across NWO funded staff positions as you see fit. The material credit applied should be specified according to the three categories below. The following conditions apply:

PROJECT-RELATED GOODS/SERVICES:

- consumables (glassware, chemicals, cryogenic fluids, etc.);
- measurement and calculation time (e.g. access to supercomputer, etc.);
- costs for acquiring or using data collections (e.g. from Statistics Netherlands), for which the total amount may not be more than € 25,000 per proposal;
- access to large national and international facilities (e.g. cleanrooms, synchrotrons, etc.);
- work by third parties (e.g. laboratory analyses, data collection, etc.);
- personnel costs for the appointment of a postdoc and/or non-scientific personnel for a smaller appointment size than those offered in the personnel budget modules;
- costs for study subjects;

TRAVEL AND ACCOMMODATION COSTS (FOR THE PERSONNEL POSITIONS APPLIED FOR IN MODULES 1A AND 1B):

- travel and accommodation costs (national and international)
- conference attendance (maximum of two per year per scientific position applied for from module 1a and/or 1b)
- field work
- work visit

IMPLEMENTATION COSTS:

- Open access publishing costs (only in full gold Open Access journals registered in the 'Directory of Open Access Journals' <https://doaj.org/>; maximum €5,000 per application.
- data management costs
- recruitment costs (for study subjects) (incl. advertisement costs)
- costs involved in applying for licences (e.g. for animal experiments); maximum € 2,000 per application
- audit costs (only for institutions that are not subject to the *Education Accountants' Protocol* of the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science), maximum € 5,000 per application

Costs that *cannot* be applied for are:

- basic facilities within the institution (e.g. laptops, desks, etc.);
- maintenance and insurance costs.

If the maximum amount of € 20,000 per year per full-time scientific position is not sufficient for realising the research, then it may be deviated from if a clear justification is provided in the proposal. This should be approved by ZonMw prior to submission.

3. MODULE INVESTMENTS (OPTIONAL)

In the budget, a distinction must be made between two types of investment:

MODULE 3A: INVESTMENTS SMALL

Equipment and/or software (e.g. lasers, specialist computers or computer programs, etc.). For this small equipment and/or software the total amount requested per application may be no more than € 100,000. This module does not require mandatory co-financing and the budget falls within the maximum of € 800,000.

MODULE 3B: INVESTMENTSMODULE

This module is optional and can be used a maximum of once per application.

In this budget module, funding can be requested for project-related investments in scientifically innovative equipment and/or data collection of at least local or (inter)national significance. The minimum amount that can be requested is €100,000 (for data collections, the lower limit is €25,000). ZonMw funds a maximum of 75% of the total investment costs up to a maximum of €250,000. The institution where the investment module will be located must contribute at least 25% in cash to the **total** cost of the investment. This contribution to the investment should be confirmed in writing by the applying institution when submitting the full application.

The amount of this investment module is in addition to the regular maximum of € 800,000 subsidy amount.

Calculation example: your investment will cost a total of € 300,000. You enter this amount in the budget and specify it as the €225,000 ZonMw contribution requested and €75,000 co-financing.

The costs for these project-related investments should be adequately specified and justified in the application (see section 5. *Assessment criteria*). Eligible for the investment module are:

- cost for investment in scientific equipment;
- costs for investments in datasets;
- personnel costs for the setting up of databases and the initial digitisation of the bibliographic device, if this cannot be purchased;
- personnel costs for employees with essential technical expertise that is necessary for the development or construction of an investment.

When applying for funding for personnel costs, it must be justified why these personnel costs are necessary. If this expertise is not available to the applicant, it should be indicated that these costs need to be purchased. The applicant's in-house procurement procedures and/or guidelines apply.

Not eligible for fundable in this module are:

- costs for infrastructural facilities that can be considered part of the standard infrastructure;
- data collections, and any associated software and bibliographies, which are already available in a different manner (see material costs with this);
- other personnel costs, including personnel costs for the exploitation and realisation of research within the facility; existing datasets or an already developed facility.
- Costs for maintenance and use of the equipment. The costs for the use of equipment by the researchers on a project can be applied for via the material credit.
- costs for an extra warranty period.

4. KNOWLEDGE UTILISATION AND PARTICIPATION (MANDATORY)

The aim of this module is to advance the proposed research as described under the Knowledge Utilisation and Participation criterion (see also section 5.2 C) and may not exceed €50,000. If the maximum amount is not sufficient to carry out the study, it can be exceeded if properly justified in the application. Since knowledge utilisation and participation takes very different forms in the different fields of science, it is up to the applicant to specify the costs required. This includes not only the means for knowledge production in the narrow sense but also all kinds of activities and means to collect knowledge in the field as well as share it with stakeholders and/or potential (end) users. Consider for example:

- Creating or maintaining cooperation and/or (jointly) developing various knowledge products;
- Costs of organising national or international meetings/symposia/workshops with the main objective of knowledge utilisation and participation;
- The development of a teaching package, for a feasibility study into application possibilities or costs for submitting a patent application;
- Obtaining advice in the field about knowledge utilization and dissemination and / or implementation (for example communication or implementation advisors);
- Involving stakeholders if possible (participation) and, if possible, the (end) target group or (end) users, who possess(es) "experiential knowledge";
- Involving citizens, known as 'citizen science', can contribute to the quality of science. With the help of citizens, data and insights can be obtained that would otherwise not be available for research. Researchers can decide for themselves whether it is useful to involve citizens in their research and how they will spend this budget (e.g. reimbursement of expenses for citizens, skills training for citizens or technical aids for participating citizens).

5. INTERNATIONALISATION (OPTIONAL)

MODULE 5A INTERNATIONALISATION

The aim of this module is to encourage international collaboration. The contribution applied for may be no higher than € 25,000. The amount applied for must be specified. If the maximum amount is not sufficient for the realisation of the research, then it may be exceeded as long as that is well motivated in the proposal. This should be approved by ZonMw prior to submission. Eligible for funding are:

- travel and accommodation costs in so far as these concern direct research costs emerging from the international collaboration and additional costs for internationalisation that cannot be covered in another manner, for example from the bench fee;
- travel and subsistence expenses for foreign visiting researchers;
- costs for organising international workshops/symposia/scientific meetings.

MODULE 5B MONEY FOLLOWS COOPERATION (MFC)

The module *Money follows Cooperation* provides the possibility of realising a part of the project at a publicly funded knowledge institution outside of the Netherlands. The applicant must convincingly argue how the researcher from the foreign knowledge institution will contribute specific expertise to the research project that is not available in the Netherlands at the level necessary for the project. This condition does not apply if NWO has concluded a bilateral agreement concerning Money follows Cooperation with the national research council of the country where the foreign knowledge institution is located (see section 3.2 Collaboration With Luxembourg).

The requested budget within this module may not exceed 50% of the total requested budget excluding the addition of the optional investment module.

Only co-applicants are eligible for this module. The co-applicant of the participating foreign knowledge institution should meet the requirements set for co-applicants in section 3.1 of this Call for proposals, with the exception of the condition that the co-applicant should be employed in the Kingdom of the Netherlands.

The rates for the personnel costs of researchers at the foreign knowledge institution are calculated using the NOW Country Correction Coefficients (CCC) table. The table can be found here: [Money Follows Cooperation | NWO](#).

The main applicant receives the grant and is responsible for transferring the amount to the foreign knowledge institution and for providing accountability for the MfC part of the grant. The MfC part of the accountability will be part of the overall final financial reporting of the project.

The exchange rate risk lies with the applicant. Therefore, gains or losses due to the exchange rate are not eligible for funding. The applicant is responsible for:

- The financial accountability for all costs in both euros and the local currency, for which the applied exchange rate used must be visible;
- A reasonable determination of the size of the exchange rate. If requested by NWO, the applicant must always be able to provide a description of this reasonable determination.

If more than € 125,000 is requested within this budget module, the final financial report must be accompanied by an audit report.

NWO does not award grants to co-applicants who fall under national and international sanctions laws and regulations. The EU Sanctions Map ([EU Sanctions Map](#)) is guiding in this respect.

COOPERATION WITH LUXEMBOURG

Cooperation with Luxembourg researchers is possible by expanding an application with a Luxembourg component (funded by FNR). Here, the foreign contribution does not count in determining the minimum and maximum budget size on the Dutch side. The Luxembourg component can be up to €500,000. Please contact ZonMw if you are considering submitting an application with a Luxembourg component or would like more information.