

ZonMw Open Competition 2024

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1 Summary

Who can Apply

The ZonMw Open Competition is intended for newly formed research teams with an original and creative combination of expertise (team science). A research team consists of one main applicant and at least one co-applicant from at least two different organisations. The synergistic composition and diversity of a team (experience, gender, ethnicity, etc.) are of great importance.

Experienced researchers who obtained their PhD at least fifteen years ago can submit an application as the main applicant, if they are employed by one of the organisations mentioned in the Call for Proposals for at least the duration of the project for which the grant is requested. Researchers from other research institutes can only submit an application as co-applicant if the conditions are met. Persons with a retirement status or 0-hours appointment are excluded from submission. Additional conditions for the main applicant, co-applicants and organisations are described in section 3.1 of the [Call for proposals](#).

What for

ZonMw conducts the Open Competition for the domain of Healthcare Research and Medical Sciences on behalf of NWO (Dutch Research Council). ZonMw Open Competition is aimed at initiating and setting up new research lines by stimulating original and creative bundling of expertise that does not necessarily enrich each other (team science). The ZonMw Open Competition focuses on curiosity-driven and innovative fundamental research in the field of healthcare research and medical sciences. In addition to scientific quality and team science, knowledge utilisation and participation are important criteria. Research proposals can be monodisciplinary, multidisciplinary or interdisciplinary in nature, given that there is a clear focus on fundamental (bio)medical research.

What to request

The maximum grant that can be applied for is € 800,000,--. In addition, it is possible to submit an optional investment module of a minimum of €100,000,-- to a maximum of €250,000,-- on top of the maximum grant that can be applied for. The maximum grant that can be applied for in applications with an investment module is € 1,050,000,-. The duration of a project is a minimum of four to a maximum of five years.

When

Deadline for submission of full proposal	September 12, 2024, 2:00 PM CEST
Receipt of referees' comments	Mid November 2024
Deadline submission rebuttal	Mid-End November 2024
Interview (physical meeting)	February 12 & 13, 2025
Decision	Start April 2025
Latest start date	Maximally 6 months after award of the grant

An interview is part of the review process for your grant application. Main and co-applicants are therefore advised to reserve both interview days in the agendas. An audio recording will be made of the interview. At the end of the review process, the audio recording will be destroyed.

2 Aim of the call for grant applications

Full information about the programme, the target group, conditions and the criteria can be found in the ZonMw Open Competition, [Call for proposals 2024](#).

The aim of the ZonMw Open Competition is to create space for curiosity-driven, creative collaboration that leads to groundbreaking science of exceptional quality in the field of health research. The programme aims to achieve this by promoting team science by bringing together researchers from two or more different disciplines and knowledge organisations.

ZonMw Open Competition has no thematic limitation and focuses on potentially groundbreaking research proposals in all scientific disciplines with a question or problem in the (border) area of fundamental (bio)medical research into healthcare and innovation.

The expected outcome of a research proposal is primarily fundamental scientific deepening (knowledge increase, model and theory development) within an innovative collaboration between research groups. In addition, knowledge utilisation/participation are important criteria (see also section 5.2C of the Call for proposals 2024).

3 Conditions and obligations

You must take account of certain rights, conditions and obligations when applying for a ZonMw grant. The rights, conditions and obligations of a grant applicant are based upon the [Dutch General Administrative Law Act \(Awb\)](#). Article 4.2 of the Awb contains specific provisions applying to ZonMw grants. [General Terms and Conditions Governing Grants of ZonMw](#) also apply.

3.1 Conditions

The [NWO Grant Rules 2017](#) and the [Approval of funding for scientific research 2008 | NWO](#) apply to all applications. This states that awarded projects must start within six months of the date of the grant award decision.

The project idea and the detailed grant application will only be considered if they meet the set administrative-technical criteria. For the full list of conditions, see section 3.4 in the [Call for proposals](#).

ZonMw requests applicants to submit a full grant application only if the submitted project idea has received a positive recommendation for elaboration in the same funding round. If you are considering submitting against a negative recommendation, please contact the programme team via opencompetitie@zonmw.nl as soon as possible, so that the grant application can be opened.

3.1.1. Who is eligible for a grant?

Applications can be submitted by research teams consisting of one main applicant and at least one co-applicant from at least two different organisations. The main applicant must be an experienced researcher who obtained his PhD at least fifteen years ago and is employed by one of the organisations mentioned in the Call for proposals for at least the duration of the research for which the grant is requested. Additional conditions for main applicant, co-applicants and organisations are described in section 3.1 of the Call for proposals.

Please note: These conditions are reviewed prior to the submission of the project idea by ZonMw on the basis of various documents. It is not permitted to add other organisations to the full grant application.

3.1.2. Preventing state aid

No grants will be awarded by ZonMw if this would or could constitute unlawful state aid¹. You can find more information about state aid on the ZonMw web page [State aid exemption decrees](#).

3.1.3. Third-party collaboration and contributions

ZonMw encourages the participation of different partners in collaborative projects. Such projects will, however, not receive a grant if the agreements would or could lead to the provision of unlawful state aid or if ZonMw's [General Terms and Conditions](#) or the conditions of the call for grant applications cannot be met.

The project application and budget must clearly show:

- Which parties are participating. Describe how each party will be actively contributing to the project; these should in any case be parties who appear in the budget as a party intending to claim a portion of the grant (only co-applicants). Also include parties that will be making an active contribution as partners in the collaborative project for their own account and at their own risk.

¹ Section 107 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU (TFEU).

- Specify with which party or parties a sponsorship agreement will be established and detail the in-kind or in-cash contributions involved.
- Indicate which parties will be hired or, if this is not yet known, specify the activities expected to be carried out by third parties and the associated costs (including VAT). For more information and conditions regarding hiring/assignment, please refer to the ZonMw web page [Grants and Collaborations/contributions from third parties](#).

Collaborations and sponsorship agreements must be finalised before submitting the full proposal.

Letters of Commitment / Matching declaration

A Letter of Commitment from each collaborating project party or sponsor is mandatory when submitting the full grant application. ZonMw requires assurance that collaborating parties/sponsors of a project are legally committed to the pledged in-cash or in-kind contributions. When applying for the investment module, the submission of a Matching Declaration for Investment is required for the same reason.

Please use the template letters available on the grant call website:

- *Letter of Commitment for co-financing - ZonMw Open Competition 2024* – for regular co-financing with an in-cash or an in-kind contribution.
- *Matching Declaration for Investment - ZonMw Open Competition 2024* – for specifying (at least 25%) in-cash matching if the investment module is used.

Collaboration and sponsorship agreement

ZonMw Open Competition requires the collaboration of several parties. If parties (also) contribute financially to the project, mutual agreements with these partners must be recorded in a consortium or sponsorship agreement.

ZonMw will assess a final draft version (approved by the parties but not yet signed) of a consortium or sponsorship agreement for compliance with at least European State aid law, the NWO Grant Rules 2017 and the conditions mentioned in the Call for proposals. The main applicant is in charge of reaching the agreement. ZonMw does not sign the agreement itself. The project can only start after the consortium or sponsorship agreement has been approved by ZonMw.

On the ZonMw web page [Grants and Collaborations/contributions from third parties](#) you will find more information about the different forms of collaboration and contributions (sponsorship/assignment). The sample agreements serve as an aid in drawing up the relevant agreement; the accompanying explanation contains the conditions the agreement must meet. The conditions stated on this web page and in the explanation form an integral part of this call for grant applications. See also page 19 Call for proposals for substantive explanation.

You can find more information about the various types of collaboration and contributions (sponsoring/assignment) with sample agreements on the ZonMw web page [Grants and collaborations/contributions from third parties](#) as an aid to drafting the relevant agreement; the accompanying explanation contains the conditions the agreement must meet. The conditions specified on this web page and in the explanation form an integral part of this call for grant applications. Where ZonMw requests draft collaboration and/or sponsorship agreements, it awards the grant on the condition that the agreements are found to be acceptable. See also page 19 in the Call for proposals for more information.

3.1.4. What amount can you request?

The budget of the ZonMw Open Competition 2024 is € 23,000,000,-- . In addition, the ZonMw programme Dementia Research Programme (OPD) is making extra budget available with a maximum of €1,000,000,-- . Any remaining amount will be returned to the OPD programme. This means that the maximum available budget for ZonMw Open Competition 2024 is €24,000,000,-- in total.

The duration of a project is a minimum of four to a maximum of five years. A maximum of € 800,000,-- can be requested for the research proposal. In addition, it is possible to submit an optional investment module of a minimum of €100,000,-- to a maximum of €250,000,-- on top of the maximum subsidy that can be applied for. The maximum grant amount that can be applied for including the investment module is therefore € 1,050,000,--.

Please note: If an investment module is requested, a personal in-cash contribution must be made of at least 25% of the total costs of the investment. This contribution to the investment must be confirmed in writing by the applicant institution through a signed *Matching Declaration for Investment*.

The budget is built up on the basis of NWO-wide standardised financial building blocks, the so-called budget modules. The available budget modules (including the maximum amounts) are listed in the Call for proposals, section 3.2. For additional information per budget module, see chapter 8 in the Call for proposals.

In case of publication according to the fully golden Open Access route, the costs for Open Access publications may be included in the project budget. This is possible up to a maximum amount of €5,000,-- per application. 'Open Access' will be included as a separate budget line in the budget. For more information on Open Access, see chapter 6 in the Call for proposals.

3.1.5. Practical conditions

Please take the following points into account when writing your application:

- Write your application in English.
- It is mandatory to add a budget to *Mijn ZonMw* for a full grant application. The total amount may not deviate more than 15% from the requested amount of the project idea.
- Reserve part of your project budget for communication and implementation. Include this amount in the budget of the full grant application.
- Mandatory attachment if you request the investment module: *Matching Declaration for Investment - ZonMw Open Competition 2024*, for specifying (at least 25%) in-cash matching.
- Optional attachment for regular co-financing with an in-cash or an in-kind contribution: *Letter of Commitment for co-financing - ZonMw Open Competition 2024*

If an annex is not mandatory, this annex will not be included in the assessment of your application.

3.2 Obligations

Obligations apply after awarding of the grant and are explained in Chapter 6 Call for proposals. The grant obligations are in addition to the grant conditions stated in section 3.5 in the Call for proposals.

4 Assessment criteria and prioritisation

4.1 Assessment procedure

Procedures for assessing subsidy applications are clarified in the infographic '[applying for a grant in 10 steps](#)' and '[How to apply for funding?](#)'.

The assessment committee assesses the relevance and quality of all applications according to the set assessment criteria (see below). After submission of the project ideas, the committee has made a selection of the most promising applications based on the procedure described in the Call for proposals. The main applicants of the most promising applications have received an invitation to submit a full proposal. The main applicants of the less promising applications are strongly discouraged to submit a full grant application.

4.2 Relevance criteria

The relevance of an application for the ZonMw Open Competition will be assessed by the evaluation committee. The aim of this criterion is to select the project ideas that best fit within the objectives of the Call for proposals, as described in Chapter 2:

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

4.3 Quality criteria

In addition to the criterion of relevance, the selection committee assesses the quality of an application. Quality is assessed using the following sub-criteria and weighting:

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

In addition, the *Methodology* and *Investment Module* components of the full application must receive a minimum qualification of 'good' in order to be eligible for an invitation to the interview or to belong to the category 'highest prioritized applications'. However, the scores of these components are not taken into account in the average of the final score for quality.

4.4 Prioritisation

There are almost always more applications eligible for funding within the program than the budget allows. Therefore, the assessment committee prioritizes applications based on their final evaluation of relevance and quality. The committee relies on the referees' motivation, the applicants' rebuttal, and the interview to arrive at an independent assessment of the application's evaluation criteria.

In cases where two or more applications cannot be distinguished from each other based on their weighted score (calculated to two decimal places), an *ex aequo* situation arises. If an *ex aequo* situation arises at the limit of the maximal budget of the grant round, the *ex aequo* procedure will come into effect (see section 4.1 Call for proposals).

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.

5 Submitting your application

5.1 Submission through Mijn ZonMw

Full proposals can only be submitted by the main applicant in ZonMw's online submission system ([Mijn ZonMw](#)). The closing date for the submission of a full proposal is Thursday September 12, 2024, at 2.00 PM CEST.

You can see the entire timeline for this funding round [here](#).

5.2 Tips

- For information on ZonMw's online submission platform, see the [Mijn ZonMw manual](#).
- Before submitting the application digitally, we recommend that you print a Word version of the application (via My ZonMw) and check for any irregularities. Especially if you first wrote the application in Word and then copied it to My ZonMw, it is possible that some characters (such as quotation marks) are not translated correctly. You can correct this yourself in *Mijn ZonMw*.
- You can save your work in My ZonMw and continue at a later moment. Applications that have been submitted cannot be changed, even if the deadline has not yet passed.
- *Mijn ZonMw* requires that for each project a *Main applicant*, a *Project leader* and an *Administrative Representative Person* are specified under the heading 'Project members'. The main applicant must be both the *Main applicant* and the *Project leader*. The *Administrative Representative Person* is the person who can legally or statutorily represent the legal entity in legal proceedings.
- It is optional to use the budget form template and to submit it via *Mijn ZonMw*. It is not necessary to sign the budget form.
- It is not necessary to submit a printed and signed grant application or Declaration of Approval.

5.3 Substantive questions

For substantive questions, please contact the ZonMw Open Competition program team, reachable via: 070 349 50 50 and open_competition@zonmw.nl. Please mention the file number of the grant application in your communication.

5.4 Technical questions

For technical questions about the use of ZonMw's online submission system, please contact the Service Desk from Monday to Friday between 8.00 AM and 5.00 PM (servicedesk@zonmw.nl, +31 (0)70 349 51 78). Please mention the file number of the grant application in your communication. In case of email, please also state your telephone number, so you can be contacted if necessary.

5.5 Downloads and links

General background information:

- [NWO Grant Rules | NWO](#)
- Infographic '[Applying for funding in 10 steps](#)'
- [What must I submit?](#)
- [Conditions and obligations](#)
- [The assessment](#)
- [Grants and collaborative third-party contributions](#)
- [State aid exemption](#)
- [Data management and FAIR data](#)
- [Open Access](#)
- [NWO's preliminary position on generative AI](#)
- [Implementation and impact](#)

ZonMw Open Competition specific information:

- [Call for proposals - ZonMw Open Competition 2024 | ZonMw](#)
- [ZonMw Open Competition program page](#)

The following documents can be downloaded via the website:

- [Call for Proposals ZonMw Open Competitie 2024](#)
- FAQ ZonMw Open Competitie 2024
- Full proposal form ZonMw Open Competitie 2024
- Matching Declaration for Investment - ZonMw Open Competitie 2024
- Letter of Commitment for co-financing - ZonMw Open Competitie 2024
- Budget form template