

# Application form – ZonMw - Explanatory Notes

## Off Road 2025

Form version: December 2024

**Expand the 'Explanatory Notes' for information on terms, conditions and requirements.**

Note: to expand the Explanatory notes in Apple OSX, select "Outline" under the "View" tab in Word or open the form in Google docs.

← Expand for General Explanatory Notes

### General Explanatory Notes

This application form consists of 4 parts. Please fill out all sections before converting the completed form to PDF and submitting it in My ZonMw. Please do not use any security locks or bookmarks in the PDF file. For any technical questions regarding your submission, please see the contact information below.

In section A, **General information**, you fill out a few application details. Section B, **Scientific proposal**, contains the main content of the application which may include figures, tables and footnotes and is structured along the lines of the assessment criteria for the Off Road programme (see the Call for Proposals). Section C, **Reference list**, comprises the list of literature references (maximum 15 references), please read the instructions for the references carefully. Finally, section D, **Evidence based biosketch** encompasses your personal details, academic profile, research direction, key output, work experience and academic research time.

**When writing your application, please take into account that it will be read by a broadly composed assessment committee with different expertise within the field of biomedical and health sciences. Therefore, it is important to write your application in an accessible way for the assessors.**

- The required font is **Calibri (or an equivalent), black, 9.5 point font size**. Use line spacing 1.15 and do not change the margins (2cm in each direction).
- Please do not change, remove or resize the fill-in tables.
- Each of the **four sections** A, B, C and D should start on a new page.
- Sections A, C and D may not include any figures, tables, graphs or pictures other than those provided in this form.
- The use of **hyperlinks** is prohibited in all sections of the application except for the **reference list (section C) and key output (section D4)**.
- Please **make sure the Explanatory notes are not visible in the PDF version of your application**. In order to achieve this, you may either collapse the Explanatory notes in the word document before converting to PDF or remove the Explanatory notes text boxes.
- For each section, there is a **limit set in terms of a maximum number of words or pages (single sided A4)**. This limit includes in-text citations, figures, tables, graphs, pictures, footnotes, and all other information provided. Specific limits per section are provided at the start of each section and can also be found in the table below.
- Refrain from using superlatives such as 'leading' or 'renowned' in any section. Instead, provide substantiation of relevant qualifications and highlight any further benefits or contributions.

| Section | Section title            | Section limit |
|---------|--------------------------|---------------|
| A1-A3   | General information      | 1 page        |
| A4      | NAM module               | 250 words     |
| B       | Scientific proposal      | 3 pages       |
| C       | Reference list           | 1 page        |
| D1-D4   | Evidence based biosketch | 2.5 pages     |
| D5-D6   | Evidence based biosketch | -             |

### Guidelines for the use of hyperlinks

The use of **hyperlinks** is prohibited in **all sections** of the application except for the **reference list (section C) and key output (section D4)**. Note that some hyperlinks will become active again when converting the document to pdf. To prevent this from happening, remove the 'https' affix.

Links to project websites, own publications, or partner organisations should **not** be included. You may use only one hyperlink per output item that links directly to the output item. This hyperlink should preferably be in the form of a persistent identifier (e.g. a **DOI**).

Before completing the application form, please study the information in the Off Road 2025 Call for Proposals, Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ), and the guidelines provided in the explanatory notes throughout this form. You can download the required documents from the [ZonMw website](#) or in the My ZonMw system. The original Dutch-language version of the Call of Proposals is the authoritative version. Where the English-language version is open to different interpretation, no additional rights may be derived from it.

**Please note that a PDF format is required for all documents to be submitted except for the budget form.** To fill out the application form, you are free to use programs other than Word, as long as you preserve the form's overall structure and layout.

Please submit all documents to use **My ZonMw** ([mijn.zonmw.nl](https://mijn.zonmw.nl)).

Note that My ZonMw uses a session timeout. **Save your application data regularly and avoid long periods of inactivity.**

**When you submit an application in My ZonMw you are required to fill out the 'Public Summary' sections (max. 1000 characters (approx. 200 words) per summary, in English and Dutch). If the grant application is successful, the public summary will be used in ZonMw publicity. The applicant is responsible for the content of the summary. We strongly recommend the applicant to ensure that no information is given in the public summary, that could later on be considered as prior art.**

In My ZonMw, upload the following as separate documents:

- Application form (PDF)
- Budget table (Excel)
- Declaration co-funding (if applicable, PDF)

You may not upload any other documents.

Completed forms and statements must be converted to PDF before submission, except for the budget form, which should be submitted as an Excel (.xlsx) file. In order for My ZonMw to process the application data properly, all submitted PDF files must be free of security locks and bookmarks. If you do not know how to convert your application to PDF format, allow extra time to get help from your institution's computer support department.

Complete the application entirely in **English**. Do not exceed the stated maximum number of pages or words for each section of the form. If you exceed the stated maximum number of pages or if you fail to supply the necessary documents, your application may be disqualified from the competition.

The deadline for submitting your proposal is **30 January 2025, 14:00:00 hrs** (CET). This means that you must have filled out all fields in My ZonMw, uploaded the proposal form and the optional annex, and have clicked the 'submit' button **before** 14:00:00 hrs (CEST). **Applications received after the deadline are automatically disqualified.**

Please bear in mind that ZonMw may contact you within two weeks after the submission deadline to make any administrative corrections to (still) meet the conditions for submission. You will have one opportunity to make the corrections within 2 working days. Adjusted applications that are received by ZonMw on time and meet the conditions will still be considered. You will receive a confirmation of the eligibility of your submission — i.e., whether it complies with the formal requirements — shortly thereafter.

If you have any questions about the proposal form or application process, please do not hesitate to contact the Off Road programme office via [offroad@zonmw.nl](mailto:offroad@zonmw.nl). For any technical questions regarding submission, please contact the ZonMw-service desk: [servicedesk@zonmw.nl](mailto:servicedesk@zonmw.nl) or +31 70 349 51 76.

## Section A. General information

← Expand for Explanatory Notes on section A

### Notes A1. Application details

Provide a title for your application, this title must be the same as the title you use in My ZonMw.

Note the duration of the project in months, this duration must align with the duration you use in My ZonMw.

### Notes A2. Ethical approval(s)

Indicate whether an approval has been received, applied for or not yet been applied for. You must send a copy of the applicable documents to ZonMw before the start of your project.

### Notes A3. If applicable: Animal testing

In the Netherlands, the Animal Experiments Act (Wet op dierproeven) states that animal testing is prohibited unless there are good reasons, and that there are no possibilities without laboratory animals to achieve the required results. Hence, if you intend to use animal models in your project, please motivate:

- a) Why the animal model is the most appropriate model for the study. Explain the rationale and provide supporting evidence for the use of this animal model.
- b) Why the research question(s) cannot be answered by animal-free methods?

### Notes A4. If applicable: NAM Investment Module

ZonMw wants to stimulate investigators to perform their research project without animal models and use new approach methodologies (NAMs) instead. Hence, applicants who decide to develop and/or implement NAMs in their application, without performing animal experiments, are eligible for the NAM Investment Module.

With this module, applicants can apply for an extra €30.000, which should be used to develop and/or implement a NAM in their Off Road project. Please refer to the call text for the conditions and criteria. Moreover, if animal experiments are conducted in this application, the NAM Investment Module cannot be used.

If you intend to make use of this module, please include the following points in your description:

- a) Describe which NAM you want to develop and/or implement in this project and why you need to use this Investment Module.
- b) Please indicate whether this NAM can be seen as a replacement for an animal experiment, and if so, for which type of animal experiment?
- c) How does the development and/or use of this NAM support you to address the research question?
- d) Also indicate whether the NAM itself is novel (and in what way), or that the novelty lies in the application by you, in your project or in your lab.

This section cannot exceed the total maximum of **250 words**.

## Section B. Scientific proposal

← Expand for Explanatory Notes on section B

### Section B. Scientific proposal

Describe your scientific proposal as accurately and convincingly as you can within the stated maximum amount of **3 pages**. This includes all text used in sections B1-B4 including in-text references, footnotes, figure captions, text in figures and tables.

Elaborate on all applicable parts of the relevance and quality criteria of the scientific proposal (see Call for proposals).

#### Notes B1. Suitability

Explain why your proposal is uniquely suited to the goals of the Off Road programme rather than a more traditional grant mechanism (see sections 2 and 4 of the Call for proposals).

#### Notes B2. Original aspects

Describe the highly innovative aspects and potential high impact of your proposal. Carefully read the Relevance assessment criteria (see Section 4.2.1 of the Call for proposals) and address them accordingly.

In general:

- **The-box:** Provide the scientific context by giving a short overview of the current (inter)national state-of-the-art of the field and accepted insights.
- **Out-of-the-box:** Emphasise in a convincing manner what makes your proposal unusually unique relative to the current field and accepted insights and why it's not simply a continuation of the/your current research. Please provide concrete evidence for your claim.
- **High-risk:** Explain why this project is considered as highly challenging and risky.
- **High-reward:** Elucidate concisely how your research, if successful, would significantly push the boundaries beyond the existing limits.

#### Notes B3. Project description

Describe your project and address everything you think is important. Carefully read the assessment criteria (see Section 4.2 of the Call for proposals) and ensure that your application addresses those. Although neither a detailed experimental plan nor extensive preliminary data are required, the assessment committee must be convinced that the research will be pursued by the applicant in a robust and rigorous manner to achieve the indicated project goal(s). The writing should be at a level that conveys the significance and impact of the application to broadly knowledgeable scientists with different expertise domains within the field of biomedical and health science.

- Describe the scientific challenge or opportunity that you propose to address, the scale, location and importance, and how addressing this challenge would have a major scientific, societal and/or economic impact.
- Describe the overall approach to be taken to answer the research question or achieve the formulated objectives, including theoretical and/or empirical arguments.
- Reflect upon the milestones and/or deliverables you intend to reach within the duration time of the project.
- Since the approach(es) may be highly challenging, please define the possible risks involved and explain how to control them along with possible alternative strategies in the event of a negative outcome.

#### Notes B4. Impact of the proposed project

Knowledge utilisation is defined as a process promoting the use of the outcomes of scientific research both outside academia and by other academic disciplines. This process frequently requires interaction between the researcher and the potential knowledge user. Such interaction may occur at any stage of the research, from the formulation of the research question right through to the dissemination of the results; even when knowledge utilisation is not foreseen within 10 years from now. Your scientific proposal could invoke more scientific work, but also could impact policy and practice, such as policymakers in health institutions, the development of medical professions, entrepreneurship/design of medical instruments/medication, as well as other parts of society and economy. ZonMw

strongly values that your work is heard in many places and leads to new practices and new questions to improve health and health care.

Please elaborate on all the applicable parts of the criterion for the chosen form of impact (see Call for proposals) and consider the following aspects – be out of the box in terms of knowledge utilisation:

- Specify via the drop-down menu which kind of impact the proposal focusses on.
- Motivate your choice for the focus if the project is successful, and how does it concretely help in solving scientific, societal, economic, cultural, policy-related or technical challenges.
- Indicate how attention will be paid to the non-chosen form(s) of impact (thus, if the focus is on scientific impact, how attention is paid to possible or unforeseen societal/economic impact of the research, and vice versa).
- Specify possible target group(s) and explain why and how they will be involved in the project.
- Describe your own role in the realisation of knowledge exchange and impact.
- Explain how you will deal with negative results.
- Indicate the period in which knowledge utilisation and impact is expected to occur.

## Section C. Reference list

← Expand for Explanatory Notes on section C

### Notes Section C. Reference list

Include a **maximum of 15 references (within one-page A4)**. For references, the reference-formatting instructions must be followed.

References formatting:

- References are ordered sequentially so that is clear where a new reference starts (i.e. numbered list or bullet point list, etc.);
- All authors should be included in reference list, **the use of 'et al.' is therefore not allowed. An exception is made when references have more than thirty (30) authors.** In that case, only the first author can be given, followed by 'et al.';
- Titles of all cited publications are required;
- For journal articles, include the journal titles either full or abbreviated according to common usage.

## Section D. Evidence-based biosketch

← Expand for Explanatory Notes on section D

### Section D. Evidence-based biosketch

Please provide a biographical sketch. The biosketch (sections D1-D4) cannot exceed the total maximum of **2.5 pages**, single sided A4. Sections D5-D6 have no specified maximum.

#### Notes D1. Personal details

Please provide only the details requested and applicable to your situation. Other information regarding training and work history that may be relevant can be placed under section D2.

#### Notes D2. Academic profile

- The maximum number of pages includes footnotes, text in figures, figure captions and tables.
- References are not allowed in this section.
- No hyperlinks are allowed, as stated in the general notes.
- No lists or total numbers of grants or prizes are allowed, nor the total acquired sum\*.

In section D2, write a **narrative** highlighting your academic achievements that support your claim of innovativeness and creativity in your prior research. Motivate clearly how they align with your research idea or present a convincing vision of how this alignment will be achieved. You may, for example, consider the qualifications and experiences that showcase your inclination to question paradigms and embrace intellectual uncertainties. Other qualifications may include the integration of disparate sources of information and/or demonstrating persistence, resilience, and the ability to persevere in the face of adversity, limited support or failure. You may also reflect on your capacity for developing unique collaborations and novel approaches when confronted with new challenges or state-of-the-art opportunities. Additionally, please consider your contributions to Open Science, 'academic citizenship' and societal engagement. These topics are meant as inspiration. You do not need to address all these topics and you may choose to include others in relation to the assessment criteria. You may also include context on situations that have hindered your ability to show your qualifications. The relevant elements in the description of your academic achievements depend on the particular field and on your personal situation. In some cases, it may be relevant to also specify your commercial contributions. **Note: a narrative is requested rather than a list of items.**

**Please also note** that the focus of section D2 is not on publications nor on output indicators, as these can be addressed in section D4. You are only allowed to refer to the output items you also mention in section D4: in that case you must refer to the number of output item as it is listed under D4. *Do not* refer to any additional publications, publication metrics, or expected/future output and do not mention total numbers of publications. See also 'guidelines for the use of quality indicators' below.

\* In case you mention specific prizes or grants, you must provide context, e.g. by describing how the opportunities offered by the grant or prize were used.

#### Guidelines for the use of quality indicators:

ZonMw signed the San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA) in April 2019. DORA aims to call a halt to the irresponsible use of bibliometric indicators in assessing research and researchers (such as the H-index, Journal Impact Factor and citations). It is a global initiative for all research disciplines (for more information about this, see <https://sfdora.org/>).

All types of quality indicators may be stated, as long as they only relate to a single output item. Indicators that do not satisfy this guideline are excluded. This means that you may **not mention H-indexes, impact factors, or any type of metric** that refers to the journal, publisher or publication platform, rather than to the individual output item.

**References to descriptions of reputation (e.g. terms such as 'top', 'high-quality', 'prominent', 'leading' etc. ) are not allowed either**; the scientific content of a paper is much more important than publication metrics or the identity of the journal in which it was published. You may not mention lists or total numbers of publications, grants or prizes, nor the total acquired sum. In case you mention specific prizes or grants, you must provide context, e.g. by describing how the opportunities offered by the grant or prize were used. You may consider a broad range of impact measures directly related to the output item, including qualitative indicators of research impact, such as influence on policy and practice. You are encouraged to provide context for each motivation to support the assessment.

## Notes D3. Distinct direction

Explain the distinctions between the planned research and your past or current work. Describe how the proposed project represents a unique and separate direction for your research. While the new research direction can build upon prior work and expertise, it should not be a straightforward extension or enlargement of an existing research endeavour. Instead, a new research direction should embody a fundamentally new insight, potentially involving the development of exceptionally innovative approaches or the formulation of radically unconventional hypotheses. Projects that are essentially extensions of ongoing research are discouraged from submission.

## Notes D4. Key output

Please list a maximum of **5 key output items** that best show your abilities and qualifications in relation to the aims of the Off Road programme. The choice of which output to include on this form is your own. You are encouraged to consider a broad range of output types. You may mention all types of output that occur in your field.

For each key output item:

- Provide the reference to the output item in the text field labelled 'Reference'.
- Provide a URL that links **directly** to the output item in the text field labelled 'URL', preferably in the form of a persistent identifier (e.g. a DOI). You may use only one hyperlink per output item. Do not use hyperlinks outside the URL text field. The provided URL must link to a publicly accessible website.
- Select the output type from the drop-down menu in the 'Type' field. If you select 'Other, please describe' you can add the output type directly behind the drop-down menu.
- Select at least one quality indicator from the drop-down menus in the 'Quality indicators' field. If you select 'Other, please describe' you can add the indicator name directly behind the drop down menu. Note that you may only use indicators that are measured at the level of the individual output item (e.g. article level indicators). Author level and journal/publisher level indicators such as H-index and Journal Impact Factor are not allowed.
- In the text field 'Motivation' add a motivation for the selection of the output item and explain what the chosen quality indicator(s) mean in this particular case. Explain your contribution, especially for multi-author output. Reference can be made to certain quality indicators, but not to additional output(s).
- Mark open output, e.g. open access publications, open access databases and open source software, by ticking the checkbox 'Open access'. Output marked as Open Access must be freely accessible worldwide at least from the time of the deadline forward.

### Further explanation and examples

Both quantitative and qualitative indicators that satisfy this guideline are permitted. For instance, the number of times a dataset is downloaded may be stated, or the impact of a certain article on policy. ZonMw encourages stating several quality indicators per output, so for example the use of the results presented in professional practice as well as a sentiment analysis of the citations or the number of citations for that one output. It is therefore possible to state the article was cited often or has led to changes in textbooks, but also, for example, that this collaboration resulted in a successful H2020 application. Applicants are requested to explain why the chosen indicators are relevant and how the indicators chosen in this specific case provide insight into the qualifications and expertise of the applicant.

As you motivate your selection of key output and clarify your contribution you may use the [Contributor Roles Taxonomy 'CRediT'](#).

For journal publications, book publications, and where possible all other output, provide the following information: the author(s) in the order as published, date, title of the publication, journal or series in which the publication appeared, volume, page numbers, and (if applicable) publisher and place.

Clearly indicate the status of the publication. In case of publications only mention publications that have been published, are in print (which implies that you are able to mention page numbers or a Digital Object Identifier (DOI)), are unconditionally accepted, or are available as pre-print in an open archive, with an identifier (DOI, arXiv id, handle, or other standard persistent identifiers). Clearly indicate the status of the publication. For a list of pre-print servers, see [List of preprint servers: policies and practices across platforms – ASAPbio](#).



Do not list publications that are still under review, and do not use the term 'forthcoming' (or any derivative thereof) as its meaning is ambiguous. Note that book contracts are not considered unconditionally accepted publications and thus may not be mentioned, unless the definitive version of the book manuscript has been unconditionally approved by the publisher.

ZonMw may request proof of the status of your output.

The Off Road committee will also be asked to ignore any mention of output that does not meet the guidelines.

## Notes D5. Work experience since completing your PhD

List the dates of each appointment and indicate whether it was full-time or part-time (in FTE), whether it was tenured ('*vast*') or fixed-term ('*tijdelijk*'), and provide the name of the institution. Insert as many additional rows as needed.

List your appointments chronologically. The bottom row should contain your current position. Please indicate the contract type of your current contract and the position you hold. If you are not a Postdoc, Assistant Professor, Associate Professor or Full Professor, describe whether the position you hold is outside or within the academic sector.

## Notes D6. Net academic research time

List the net academic research time since your dissertation, i.e. how long have you actually been able to work in research, after deducting management tasks, education, leave, interruptions and non-scientific work. This time span between your graduation and the submission of the funding application is your net academic research time, calculated in full-time equivalents (FTE). In the biosketch accompanying your funding application, you should state this in (full) months. Do not include any calculations here. The committee evaluates your track record of achievements in relation to your net academic age, allowing us to make a fair comparison with other applicants.

Any special circumstances (e.g. due to COVID-19) that account for a reduction in productivity may be mentioned in the box underneath the net academic research time. The maximum word limit for this explanation is **100 words**. Just like the number of months spent on research, this information will help the committee interpret your academic achievements and scientific output.