



ZONMw OPEN COMPETITION

Free, curiosity-driven research

CALL FOR PROPOSALS

FUNDING ROUND 2025

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 reveal, the Dutch text is legally binding and prevails.

Den Haag, 2025

ZonMw

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1 Introduction

In this Call for proposals information is provided about the application procedure for **'ZonMw Open Competitie 2025'** funding round. ZonMw Open Competition is carried out by ZonMw on behalf of the Dutch Research Council (NWO) and falls under its responsibility.

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 how your proposal will be assessed (Chapter 4). This is the information you need to submit a grant application. Chapter 5 states the obligations for grant recipients in the event you are awarded funding. Chapter 6 contains the contact details and Chapter 7 the financial annexes.

1.1 Background

Free, fundamental scientific research forms the basis for understanding the world around us, for progress and development. ZonMw therefore encourages curiosity-driven and innovative fundamental research in biomedical and health research and care innovation.

Health research includes the study of the occurrence, development, recognition and prevention of diseases, treatment of diseases, reduction of the burden of disease, and functioning of the health care system. Its purpose is to contribute to the promotion of health or the alleviation of the burden of disease. It covers the entire field of medical-biological, clinical scientific, population and (healthcare) system research.

1.1.1 Changes since the previous Call for proposals

NWO has a new grant scheme. The changes have to do with the obsolescence of the NWO Grant Scheme 2017. This has now been adapted to current laws and regulations. From 2025, the ZonMw Open Competition programme will make use of this new scheme.

Applicants will receive the intended advice on their pre-proposal from the selection committee in a timely manner. Applicants with a preliminary negative advice will then be given a number of working days to submit a request for correction of a factual inaccuracy. This option is not intended to provide additional, new information regarding the application or to ask questions to the selection committee. Taking these requests into account, the selection committee will assess whether it sees reason to change its intended advice. After that, the final prioritisation will be determined and a decision will be taken to develop into a complete application.

1.2 Available budget

The available budget for this Call for proposals is €24,000,000. 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 €25,000,000.

1.3 Submission deadlines

When you submit your application in *My ZonMw*, you will also need to enter some details online. Therefore please start submitting your application at least one day before the deadline of this Call for proposals. Applications that are submitted after the deadline will not be taken into consideration.

The deadline for submitting pre-proposals¹ is **3 April 2025**, before **14.00 CEST**. The deadline for submitting full proposals is **11 September 2025**, before **14.00 CEST**.

¹ Pre-proposal means projectidea in accordance with the original ZonMw Open Competition Call for proposals in Dutch.

2 Aim

This chapter describes the aim of the programme and the impact.

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. ZonMw Open Competition has no thematic limitations 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 an application is primarily scientific advancement (increased knowledge, development of modelling and theory) within a new collaboration between research groups (*team science*). In addition, impact is important criterion (see also section 4.3). 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 4.3).

2.3 Impact

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

3 Conditions for applicants

This chapter contains the conditions that are applicable to your grant application. Firstly it describes who can apply for funding (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 funding conditions (Section 3.5).

3.1 Who can apply

Researchers may act as main applicants if they have a tenured position (and therefore a paid position for an indefinite period) or a tenure track agreement at one of the following research organisations:

- universities and universities of applied sciences (UAS) as referred to in Article 1.8 paragraph 1 of the Higher Education and Scientific Research Act and universities listed in the [Policy Rules for Universities located in the Kingdom of the Netherlands](#);
- university medical centres by which is meant academic hospitals as referred to in Article 1.13 paragraph 1 of the Higher Education and Scientific Research Act;
- institutes affiliated to the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences (KNAW) or NWO;
- Netherlands Cancer Institute;
- the Max Planck Institute for Psycholinguistics in Nijmegen;
- Naturalis Biodiversity Center;
- Advanced Research Centre for NanoLithography (ARCNL);
- Princess Máxima Center.

Persons with a zero-hour employment agreement or with a contract for a limited period of time (other than a tenure track appointment) may not submit a proposal.

It could be the case that the applicant's tenure track agreement ends before the intended completion date of the project for which funding is applied for, or that before that date, the applicant's tenured contract ends due to the applicant reaching retirement age. In that case, the applicant needs to include a statement from their employer in which the research organisation concerned guarantees that the project and all project members for whom funding has been requested will receive adequate supervision for the full duration of the project. Applicants with a part-time contract should guarantee adequate supervision of the project and all project members for whom funding is requested.

Co-applicants may be affiliated to the research organisations listed in this Section, and to other research organisations as referred to in Article 1.1, paragraph 4 of the NWO Grant Rules 2024 and which meet the following cumulative conditions.

The organisation must:

- be established in the Netherlands²;
- be a foundation, association or legal entity governed by public law;
- have as its primary goal the independent conduct of its own fundamental research, industrial research or experimental development;

² Co-applicants with an appointment at a research organisation abroad are allowed, but must meet all cumulative conditions for co-applicants from other organisations with the exception of the location in the Netherlands. A main applicant must be established in the Netherlands at all times.

Chapter 3: Conditions for applicants

- be able to state that the organisation keeps separate accounts with regard to economic/non-economic activities and that undertakings with decisive influence on the organisation do not enjoy preferential access to the organisation's results.

NWO will not fund research organisations under this Call for proposals that are primarily engaged in the wide dissemination of the results of research activities by way of teaching, publication or knowledge.

Please note: Prior to the submission of an application ZonMw/NWO assesses on the basis of the above-mentioned conditions whether an organisation complies with Article 1.1, paragraph 4 of the NWO Grant Rules 2024 and may therefore participate as a co-applicant. ZonMw/NWO performs this assessment to preclude the granting of prohibited state aid. This assessment must also be conducted if an organisation was assessed within another ZonMw or NWO programme and was permitted as a co-applicant.

The organisation of the prospective co-applicant must provide the following documents no less than 10 working days prior to the submission deadline (meaning no later than **20 March before 14:00:00 CE(S)T**) by email to opencompetitie@zonmw.nl:

- a recent extract from the Netherlands Chamber of Commerce;
- the deed of incorporation or current articles of association;
- the latest available annual accounts accompanied by an audit statement³;
- the completed Declaration Research organisation, available on funding page of this Call for proposals.

Other relevant documentation may be added. NWO may request additional information if the above documents are not sufficiently conclusive to determine whether the organisation may act as a co-applicant. If the organisation of the prospective co-applicant does not submit the necessary documents for this assessment in time, ZonMw/NWO cannot accept the organisation as a co-applicant.

If new co-applicants are added to the consortium in the full proposal and these new co-applicants are not affiliated to an institution listed in this section, these conditions will also be checked for this organisation/these organisations. The following documents must be submitted no less than 10 working days before the submission deadline (meaning no later than **28 August before 14:00:00 CE(S)T**) by email to opencompetitie@zonmw.nl:

- a recent extract from the Netherlands Chamber of Commerce;
- the deed of incorporation or current articles of association;
- the latest available annual accounts accompanied by an audit statement²;
- the completed Declaration Research organisation, available on funding page of this Call for proposals.

A research organisation that was approved as an applicant prior to the submission of a pre-proposal does not need to be reassessed prior to the submission of the full proposal.

³ Organisations that are not legally obliged to have their annual accounts audited do not need to provide such an auditor's statement. They must however be able to demonstrate that this legal requirement is not applicable to the organisation concerned.

3.1.1 Additional conditions

Main applicant:

- Main applicants must have obtained their PhD at least 15 years ago at the time of the pre-proposal deadline. The date on the doctoral degree is decisive for this. This condition does *not* apply to co-applicants.

All applicants (main and co-applicants):

- A research team:
 - consists of one main applicant and at least one co-applicant;
 - 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 2025;
- 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 applicant are:

- Researchers who have submitted a full proposal in the Vici funding round 2025 to ZonMw or any of the other NWO domains;
- Researchers who have been awarded a ZonMw Open Competition grant or Vici at ZonMw or one of the other NWO domains in the 2022, 2023, 2024 or 2025 round.

3.1.2 Main and co-applicants

The main applicant submits the proposal via the ZonMw web application *My ZonMw*. During the assessment process, ZonMw will communicate with the main applicant. After a proposal has been awarded funding, the main applicant will become the project leader and point of contact for ZonMw. The knowledge institution of the main applicant is the main beneficiary and will become the official secretary. Co-applicants have an active role in realising the project. The (sub)project leaders and beneficiary/beneficiaries are jointly responsible for realising the entire project.

3.2 What can be applied for

Per project, a grant amount of at most €800,000 can be applied for. 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 subsidy amount that can be applied for for applications with an investment module is therefore € 1,050,000. The maximum duration of the proposed project is a minimum of 48 to a maximum of 60 months. The applicants can include costs for personnel, equipment, investments and knowledge utilization. The available budget modules (including the maximum amounts) are listed below. Apply only for funding that is vital to realise the project. The rates and an explanation of these budget modules are given in chapter 7.

3.2.1 Personnel

Funding may be requested for salary costs of personnel contributing to the project. The amount depends on the type of appointment and the organisation where the personnel is employed.

3.2.1.1 Personnel at a university in the Kingdom of the Netherlands, umc or a research organisation

For personnel working at a university in the Kingdom of the Netherlands, university medical centre (umc) or another research organisation, as referred to in Article 1.1, first paragraph, subparagraphs c to h of the NWO Grant Rules 2024 salary costs can be claimed for the following positions: PhD student, postdoc, physician-researcher, non-scientific personnel (NWP), and other scientific staff (OWP) for research leave of the applicant(s).

- A maximum of 3 positions can be applied for the type of position: PhD student, postdoc and physician-researcher.
- A maximum of €100,000 can be requested for non-academic staff (NWP) at universities.
- A maximum of €100,000 can be requested for other academic staff (OWP) at universities.
- Research leave can be requested up to a maximum of 5% of the subsidy amount.

3.2.1.2 Personnel of universities of applied sciences, educational institutions, TO2 institutes and other organisations

It is possible to claim salary costs of personnel of universities of applied sciences, educational institutions, TO2 institutes, other organisations. A maximum of €100,000 can be requested for this type of position. Financing is done according to the applicable rates from table 2.2, column 'Hourly rate productive hours, excl. VAT' of the Manual on Government Rates [Salary Tables | NWO](#).

3.2.1.3 Students

It is possible to engage students in the project if they are studying at a research organisation as referred to in Section 3.1. You can enter the costs of this as material costs within the project. There is no maximum on the number of students who can participate in the project.

3.2.1.4 Scientific personnel at a research organisation abroad

It is possible to claim salary costs for scientific personnel from foreign research organisations. Up to a maximum of 50% of the grant amount can be requested for personnel at research organisations abroad. An exception is a collaboration with Luxembourg (FNR), where a maximum of € 500,000 on top of the ZonMw budget may be requested.

3.2.2 Material

Funding may be requested for all project-specific material costs. These costs are subject to a maximum of 25% of the grant amount allocated for personnel costs. A maximum of 50% of the grant amount for material costs can be requested for research organisations abroad.

3.2.3 Investments

Funding may be requested for investments in equipment, infrastructure and other research resources that have economic value or can be reused after the project ends. Salary costs of personnel who put the equipment, infrastructure and other research resources in a state of readiness can be claimed as part of the investments. The rates and conditions of Personnel apply here and the costs should be claimed as Investments. Investments can only be made at research organisations listed in Section 3.1.

There are two types of investment that can be made. See Chapter 7 for more information.

3.2.4 Knowledge utilisation

Funding can be requested for activities that promote the use of knowledge from the research,⁴ in order to increase the societal impact of the research.

A maximum of 5% of the grant amount can be used for this module. It is mandatory to make use of this module.

3.2.5 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 on the FNR website and in Module 1I 'Bilateral agreement with Luxembourg (Chapter 7).

3.2.6 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.

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All activities applied for under this budget module must fit within the definition of "Knowledge Transfer Activities" used by the European Commission in the Framework for State Aid for Research, Development and Innovation (OJEU 2022, C 414).

3.3 Preparing and submitting an application

The steps involved in writing your project idea (pre-proposal) and full proposal are:

- download the application form from the ZonMw web application *My ZonMw* or from the ZonMw web page (on the grant page of the funding instrument concerned);
- complete the application form in English (mandatory);
- save the application form in *My ZonMw* as a PDF file and upload it with any compulsory annexes;
- fill in the requested information online in *My ZonMw*.

Annex(es) for the project idea:

- form non-referees (maximum 3 names; optional);
- statement appointment and project supervision;
- declaration of research organisation (only for new organisations to be assessed).

Annex(es) for the full proposal:

- budget (Excel; the amounts must correspond to the module in *My ZonMw*);
- statement appointment and project supervision (only for newly added members);
- declaration of research organisation (only for new organisations to be assessed).
- declaration regular co-funding (mandatory if a contribution in kind/cash has been entered);
- declaration co-funding investment module (mandatory if applicable).

The appendix must be drawn up in accordance with the template provided by ZonMw. Annexes must be uploaded in *My ZonMw* separately from the application. All of the other annexes, except for the budget, must be submitted as PDF files (without encryption). The budget must be submitted in *My ZonMw* as an Excel file. Any annexes other than those stated above are *not* permitted.

An application can only be submitted via the web application *My ZonMw*. Applications that are not submitted via *My ZonMw* will not be taken into consideration. As the main applicant, you are required to submit the application via your own personal *My ZonMw*-account.

It is important to start with your application in *My ZonMw* on time:

- if you do not yet have an *My ZonMw* account, then you should create this on time to prevent any possible registration problems;
- any new research organisations may also have to be added to *My ZonMw* by ZonMw;
- you also need to submit other details online.

Applications submitted after the deadline will not be taken into consideration by ZonMw. For technical questions, please contact the *My ZonMw* helpdesk, see contact (Chapter 6).

3.3.1 Advice about choice in NWO 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 with the domain. 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 for proposals. However, the final decision on submission is up to the applicants. For contact information, see section 6.1.

3.4 Conditions for submission

3.4.1 Formal conditions for submission

ZonMw will assess your application against all the conditions set out in this Call for proposals, including the conditions listed below. Your application will only be admitted to the assessment procedure if it meets these conditions. After submitting your application, ZonMw requests the main applicant to be available to implement any possible administrative corrections so that you can (still) meet the conditions for submission.

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 after any request for additions or changes, is 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 deadline;
- the application is written in English;
- the application budget is drawn 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, after a possible request for additions or changes, have been completed and submitted completely and according to the instructions and in accordance with the terms of this Call for proposals.

3.5 Conditions on granting

The [NWO Grant Rules 2024](#) and the [Agreement on the Payment of Costs for Scientific Research](#) are applicable to all applications. Accordingly, awarded projects should start within six months from the date of the grant award decision.

3.5.1 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 \(loketkennisveiligheid.nl\)](https://www.loketkennisveiligheid.nl).

3.5.2 Data management

The results of scientific research must be replicable, verifiable and falsifiable. In the digital age, this means that, in addition to publications, research data must also be publicly accessible insofar as this is possible. ZonMw expects that research data resulting from ZonMw-funded projects will be made publicly available, as much as possible, for reuse by other researchers. "As open as possible, as closed as necessary" is the applicable principle in this respect. Researchers, at very least, are expected to make the data and/or non-numerical results that underlie the conclusions of the published work resulting from the project publicly available at the same time as the work's publication. Any costs incurred for this can be included in the project budget. Researchers should explain how data emerging from the project will be dealt with based on the data management section in the proposal and the data management plan that is drawn up after funding is awarded.

Data management section

The data management section is part of the proposal. 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 already need to be taken, both during data generation and as part of analysing the data, to make its subsequent storage and dissemination possible. If it is not possible to make all data from the project publicly available, for example due to reasons of privacy, ethics or valorisation, then the applicant is obliged to list the reasons for this in the data management section.

The data management section in the proposal is not evaluated and will therefore not be weighed in the decision whether to award funding. However, both the referees and the committee can issue advice with respect to the data management section.

3.5.3 Scientific integrity

In accordance with the NWO Grant Rules 2024, the project that NWO funds must be carried out in accordance with the nationally and internationally accepted standards for scientific conduct as stated in the Netherlands Code of Conduct for Research Integrity (2018). By submitting the proposal, the applicant commits to this code. In the case of a (possible) violation of these standards during a project funded by NWO, the applicant should immediately inform NWO of this and should submit all relevant documents to NWO. More information about the code of conduct and the policy regarding research integrity can be found on the website: [Scientific integrity | NWO](https://www.nwo.nl/en/scientific-integrity).

3.5.4 Ethical statement or licence

The applicant is responsible for determining whether an ethical statement or licence is needed for the realisation of the proposed project. The applicant should ensure that this is obtained from the relevant institution or ethics committee on time. The absence or presence of an ethical statement or licence at the time of the application process has no effect on the assessment of the application. If the project is awarded funding, then the grant is issued under the condition that the necessary ethical statement or licence is obtained before the latest start date for the project. The project cannot start until ZonMw has received a copy of the ethical statement or licence.

3.5.5 Nagoya Protocol

The Nagoya Protocol 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 ([Home - ABS Focal Point](#)). NWO assumes that researchers will take all necessary actions with respect to the Nagoya Protocol.

3.5.6 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](#).

3.5.7 Co-funding

All applications are subject to [the Co-funding Scheme](#).

Additional definitions:

- co-funding in kind: capitalised personnel and/or material contributions from users;
- co-funding in cash is used to cover part of the total project costs and together with the grant provided by ZonMw constitutes the required financial resources.

[Co-funding requirement investment module](#)

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 declaration of co-funding signed by an authorised representative of the co-financing party when submitting the detailed application (i.e. not yet with the pre-proposal). 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 declaration of co-financing can be found on the funding page of this instrument. Declarations of Co-financing will not be forwarded to committee members and will not be assessed.

The following principles apply to co-funding:

- ZonMw is the main funder of an application. Applications of which the co-funding from co-funders exceeds 49% of the total project costs will not be taken into consideration;
- co-funding in cash, is the net amount paid by a co-funder to the applicant. The applicant invoices co-funding in cash and, if applicable, VAT to the co-funder.

Not eligible as co-funding in cash are⁵:

- grant provided by ZonMw;

Co-funding declaration of participating co-funders

In a co-funding declaration the co-funder expresses financial support for the project and confirms the co-funding promised. Co-funding declarations from co-funders, which are mentioned in the application, are compulsory as attachments when submitting the proposal. The co-funding declaration must be signed by an authorised signatory of the co-funder. ZonMw provides a compulsory format for the co-funding declaration on the funding page of this Call for proposals on the ZonMw website. If the application is awarded, the co-funder must confirm its contribution(s) in the consortium agreement. This agreement also contains further agreements between the co-funder(s) and the applicant(s) (see Section 5.1.2).

Justification co-funding in cash and in kind

The ratio of co-funding (both in cash and in kind) to the grant provided by ZonMw in this Call for proposals, applies from submission of an application until the grant is determined. Co-funding in cash affects the grant amount provided by ZonMw because both ZonMw's contribution and co-funding in cash are used for the same project-specific costs (unlike co-funding in kind).

One-off indexing due to other applicable rates after submission does not affect the ratio and co-financing requirement for the ZonMw contribution. For this, ZonMw assumes the ratio in the application budgets accepted by ZonMw.

After determination of a project the final grant amount is settled on the basis of the final report, the financial conditions and the co-funding ratio as present in the application budget.

In case of partly provided co-funding in cash (due to unforeseen circumstances, such as bankruptcy) ZonMw's contribution is based on the original grant award, taking into account the co-funding in cash that was provided and the applicable minimum co-funding requirement, if applicable.

Co-funding in cash in excess of the co-funding requirement affects the applied ratio of co-funding to grant provided by ZonMw. If a project has co-funding in cash in excess of the co-funding requirement and partial in cash co-funding has been provided at determination, the ZonMw contribution is never more than the original contribution from the grant award. The ratio of the ZonMw contribution is then at most the contribution that follows from the co-funding requirement.

At all times ZonMw must be notified of problems in expected co-funding (in cash and/or in kind). In addition to financial implications for a project, ZonMw may also require adequate changes to a project as a change request so that research can be continued to the best of its ability.

⁵ Ineligible co-funding in kind is described in the Co-funding Scheme

4 Assessment procedure

This chapter first describes the assessment according to the DORA principles (Section 4.1) and the course of the assessment procedure (Section 4.2). Second, it states the criteria that the assessment committee will use to assess your application (Section 4.3).

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

ZonMw and NWO strives to achieve an inclusive culture where there is no place for conscious or unconscious barriers due to cultural, ethnic or religious background, gender, sexual orientation, health or age ([Diversity and inclusion | NWO](#)). ZonMw and NWO encourages referees and members of an assessment committee/jury to be actively aware of implicit associations and to try to minimise these. ZonMw and NWO will provide them with information about concrete ways of improving the assessment of an application.

4.1 The 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 is implementing the principles of DORA, see [DORA | NWO](#).

4.2 Procedure

The application procedure consists of the following steps:

- submission of the pre-proposal;
- admissibility of the pre-proposal;
- assessment of the pre-proposal;
- decision-making;
- submission of the full proposal;
- admissibility of the proposal;
- peer review by referees;

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- rebuttal;
- interview selection;
- decision-making;
- interview;
- assessment committee meeting;
- decision-making.

An external, independent assessment committee will be assigned by the ZonMw board for this Call for proposals, consisting of representatives from various (bio)medical disciplines. The task of the assessment committee is to assess the applications and the relevant documents that are submitted, in conjunction with each other and with regard to both the respective merits of each application and the assessment criteria outlined in this Call for proposals.

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:

4.2.1 Submission of the pre-proposal

The submission of a project idea is compulsory for this Call for proposals. The project idea is a concise proposal. The project idea form that you complete must be received prior to the deadline via *My ZonMw*. After submitting the project idea, the main applicant will receive a confirmation of receipt.

4.2.2 Admissibility of the pre-proposal

You will hear from ZonMw as quickly as possible after having submitted your project idea whether or not it will be taken into consideration. ZonMw will make this assessment based on several administrative-technical criteria (see the formal conditions for submission, Section 3.4). ZonMw can only take your project idea into consideration if it meets these conditions.

Please bear in mind that within two weeks after the submission deadline, ZonMw may approach you with any possible administrative corrections that need to be made so that your project idea can (still) meet the conditions for submission. You will be given one opportunity to make the corrections, and you will be given five working days to complete this.

4.2.3 Assessment of the pre-proposal

The selection committee assesses the project ideas on the basis of the criteria in a comparative manner and prioritises them, without the use of external referees. She selects and formulates her comments on the basis of the substantive assessment criteria and gives the project idea a numerical score. The NWO score table is used for this (on a scale of 1 to 9, where '1' is excellent and '9' is insufficient).

Applicants will receive the intended advice from the selection committee. Applicants with a preliminary negative advice will receive the motivation of the selection committee. If an applicant is of the opinion that the motivation contains a factual error, the applicant has a number of working days to request a correction of this, using the format provided. This option is not intended to provide additional, new information regarding the application or to ask questions to the committee. Taking these requests into account, the selection committee will assess whether it sees reason to change its intended advice. After that, the final prioritization will be determined.

4.2.4 Decision pre-proposal

The assessment will result in a decision on whether or not to further elaborate on the project idea. The advice of the assessment committee on the project ideas is submitted to the ZonMw board for decision. The ZonMw board assesses the procedure followed and the advice of the assessment committee. The ZonMw board then determines the final qualifications and decides which applicants will be invited to develop their project idea and which applicants may not submit a full proposal.

The highest priority applicants will receive a decision in time to develop the project idea and that they may submit a full proposal before the deadline. The other applicants will receive a decision that they may not submit a full application. These applicants do not have the option of submitting an application in that case. The number of applicants to be invited is determined on the basis of the available budget. As a guideline, about two to three times as many applications are worked out as can ultimately be granted.

4.2.5 Submission of a full proposal

The full proposal must be an elaboration of the assessed project idea; significant changes to the research design and research team are therefore not permitted unless this is apparent from the preliminary advice of the project idea.

For the submission of the proposal, a standard form is available on the funding page of this Call for proposals on the ZonMw website. When you write your proposal, you must adhere to the questions stated on this form and the procedure given in the explanatory notes. You must also adhere to the conditions for the maximum number of words and pages.

Your complete application form must have been received before the deadline via *My ZonMw* (see Section 1.3). After this deadline, you can no longer submit a proposal. After submitting the proposal, the main applicant will receive a confirmation of receipt.

4.2.6 Admissibility of the full proposal

As soon as possible after you have submitted your proposal, you will hear from ZonMw whether or not your proposal will be taken into consideration. ZonMw will determine this based on several administrative-technical criteria (see the formal conditions for submission, Section 3.4). ZonMw can only take your proposal into consideration if it meets these conditions.

Please bear in mind that within two weeks after the submission deadline, ZonMw may approach you with any possible administrative corrections that need to be made so that your proposal can (still) meet the conditions for submission. You will be given one opportunity to make the corrections, and you will be given five working days to do this.

4.2.7 Peer review by referees

Prior to the assessment committee considering your proposal, ZonMw will request input from at least two external referees. These are independent advisers who are experts in the subjects of the proposal. They will assess the proposals based on the assessment criteria outlined in the Call for proposals (chapter 4).

A maximum of three non-referees can be registered. Applicants can register these non-referees in *My ZonMw* when submitting the pre-proposal. ZonMw will not approach these non-referees to assess the proposal as external referees.

4.2.8 Rebuttal

The main applicant subsequently receives the anonymised referee reports. You then have the opportunity to formulate a rebuttal. You will be given ten working days to submit your rebuttal via *My ZonMw*. If you decide to withdraw the proposal, then you should do this as quickly as possible by sending an email stating this to the office and withdrawing the proposal in *My ZonMw*. If ZonMw receives your rebuttal after the deadline, then it will not be included in the rest of the procedure.

4.2.9 Pre-advice assessment committee

After this, your proposal, the referees' reports and your rebuttal will be submitted for comments to several members of the assessment committee (the pre-advisers). The pre-advisers will provide a written substantive and reasoned response to the proposal. The selection committee weighs the arguments of the referees (also among themselves) and examines whether the rebuttal contains a substantively sound response to the critical comments from the referees' reports. In this respect, the referees' reports are important for the final assessment, but the selection committee forms an independent opinion on the application. They will formulate these comments based on the substantive assessment criteria (see Section 4.3.1) and will give the proposal a numerical score per assessment criterion. For this, the NWO score table will be used (on a scale of 1 to 9, where "1" is excellent and "9" unsatisfactory).

4.2.10 Interview selection

The proposals, the referees' reports and the rebuttal will be submitted to the assessment committee (the pre-advisers). Based on this, the assessment committee makes its own assessment that results in a prioritisation.

During the interview selection meeting, the selection committee makes a recommendation on which applications are eligible for the category 'highest ranking 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-advisers of the assessment committee

Decision on the 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.

4.2.11 Interview

During the interview, the assessment committee will have the opportunity to pose questions, including new questions that the referees did not ask. During the interview, representatives of the consortium including the main applicant, will be able to respond to these in the discussion with the committee. In this manner, the principle of having a hearing and an opportunity for rebuttal is further applied. The interview is an important part of the assessment procedure and can lead to an adjustment of both the assessment and the score of the proposal.

4.2.12 Prioritisation

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".

4.2.13 Ex aequo

ZonMw understands *ex aequo* to be a situation in which two or more proposals based on their weighted score cannot be distinguished from each other. An *ex aequo* situation is relevant with respect to the borders of the available budget or the selection borders. The existence of an *ex aequo* situation is determined as follows. The starting point in this process is the ranking drawn up by the assessment committee, with the final scores rounded down to two decimal points. The reference score here is the score of the lowest-ranked proposal within the borders of the available budget or the selection borders. All proposals with a score that is within 0.05 or less of the reference score will be considered. In this way, the proposals that are equal within a score of 0.1 will be selected.

If an *ex aequo* situation occurs at the borders of the available budget or the selection borders, then in order to help increase the number of women working in the scientific field, the proposal from a female main applicant will end as the highest. If the *ex aequo* situation is not resolved via this procedure, then the proposal with the highest score for the criterion 'Quality of the research plan' will be ranked highest. If the proposals subsequently still remain tied, then the application with the highest score on the criterion 'quality of the team' will be decisive. If a tie remains, the assessment committee, with the help of an (anonymous) majority vote, will determine the ranking (in accordance with Article 2.2.6, paragraph 5 of the NWO Grant Rules 2024). If this vote also fails to provide a resolution, or if it is deemed to be undesirable to vote, then the *ex aequo* situation will be sent onto the decision-making body.

4.2.14 Decision-making

Finally, the ZonMw board will assess the procedure followed as well as the advice from the assessment committee. They will subsequently determine the final qualifications and make a decision over awarding or rejecting the proposals.

4.2.15 Timetable

Below, you will find the timetable for this Call for proposals. During the current procedure, NWO might find it necessary to make further changes to the timetable for this Call for proposals. You will be informed about this in time.

Pre-proposal

4 March 2025, 10.30 CEST	Information meeting
20 March 2025, 14.00 CEST	Deadline legal assessment research institute (if applicable)
3 April 2025, 14.00 CEST	Deadline pre-proposals
End of June 2025	Applicants receive preliminary advice about whether or not to elaborate on their project idea and turn it into a full proposal
Mid/end of June 2025	Deadline submission request to correct
Early July 2025	Decision project idea

Full proposal

28 August 2025, 14.00 CEST	Deadline legal assessment research institute (if applicable)
11 September 2025, 14.00 CEST	Deadline full proposals
October – early November 2025	Referees consulted
Mid - end November 2025	Applicants can submit a rebuttal
End of January 2026	Interview selection and decision category 'highest ranking proposals'
4 & 5 February 2026	Interviews (Utrecht)
End of March 2026	Decision by the board

4.3 Criteria

The applications submitted within this Call for proposals will be substantially assessed on the basis of the following criteria for relevance and quality in the following sections:

4.3.1 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); evident from the fact that the members of the team have not previously collaborated or published jointly on the topic described.

4.3.2 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:

Project idea:

- A. Scientific quality (60%);
- B. Quality of the project team (40%);

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.

4.3.2.1 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;
- Feasibility, risk analysis and backup plan.

4.3.2.2 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;
- If applicable, the collaboration with the co-applicant from abroad is essential for the application
- 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.

4.3.2.3 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.

4.3.3 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;

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- 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.

4.3.4 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;

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- 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.

5 Obligations for grant recipients

This chapter details the various obligations that - in addition to the conditions stated in Section 3.5 - apply after funds have been awarded.

5.1 Additional terms and conditions

5.1.1 Data management – access to data

After a proposal has been awarded funding, the researcher should elaborate the data management section into a data management plan. For this, applicants can make use of the advice from the referees and committee. The applicant must describe in the plan whether existing data will be used, or whether new data will be collected or generated, and how this data will be made FAIR: Findable, Accessible, Interoperable, Reusable. Before submission, the data management plan should be checked by a data steward or similar officer of the research organisation where the project will be realised. NWO will check the plan as quickly as possible. Approval of the data management plan by NWO is a condition for disbursement of the funding. The plan can be adjusted during the research.

More information about the data management protocol of NWO can be found at: [Research data management | NWO](#).

5.1.2 Intellectual property and consortium agreement

With respect to intellectual property (IP), the NWO IP policy applies. This can be found in Chapter 4 of the NWO Grant Rules 2024.

Applicants must carry out a project funded by ZonMw during the time that they work for the research organisation. If an applicant or a researcher funded by ZonMw is appointed by more than one employer, then the other employer should relinquish any possible IP rights that emerge from the project of the applicant.

[Consortium or sponsor agree](#)

After a proposal has been awarded funding, the conclusion of a consortium agreement is one of the conditions for starting the project. In this agreement, arrangements are made about intellectual property and publication, knowledge transfer, confidentiality, co-financing payments, progress reports, and final reports. Approval by ZonMw is mandatory before a project can commence. In the case ZonMw does not accept the agreement, the grant cannot be financed.

The model agreement of NWO will be made available to the granted applicants. This model agreement has been drawn up in accordance with the NWO Grant Rules 2024.

5.1.3 Socially responsible licensing

The knowledge that emerges from the project could be suitable for use in society. When agreements about licensing and/or the transfer of research results developed under this Call for proposals are made, due consideration should be given to the ten principles for socially responsible licensing, as stated in the NFU factsheet "[Ten principles for Socially Responsible Licensing | NFU](#)".

5.1.4 Open Access

As a signatory to the Berlin Declaration (2003) and a member of coalition S (2018), NWO and ZonMw are committed to making the results of the research it funds openly accessible via the internet (Open Access). By doing this, ZonMw and NWO give substance to the ambitions of the Dutch government to make all publicly funded research available in Open Access form. Scientific publications arising from projects awarded on the basis of this Call for proposals must therefore be made available in Open Access form in accordance with the Open Access Policy.

Scientific articles

Scientific articles must be made available in Open Access form 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 the immediate deposition of at least the author accepted manuscript of the article in an Open Access repository registered in Open DOAR;
- publication in a journal for which a transformative Open Access agreement exists between UNL and a publisher. For further information, see [Home | Open access](#).

Books

Different requirements apply to scholarly books, book chapters and edited collections. See the Open Access Policy Framework at [Open Science | NWO](#).

CC BY licence

To ensure the widest possible dissemination of publications, at least a Creative Commons (CC BY) licence must be applied. Alternatively – in case of substantial interest – the author may request to publish under a CC BY-ND licence. For books, book chapters and collected volumes, all CC BY licence options are allowed.

Costs

Costs for publication in fully Open Access journals can be budgeted in the application using the budget module for “material costs”. Costs for publications in hybrid journals are not eligible for reimbursement by NWO. For Open Access books, a separate NWO Open Access Books Fund is available.

For more detailed information about NWO’s Open Access policy, see [Open Science | NWO](#).

6 Contact and other information

6.1 Contact

6.1.1 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 <mailto:opencompetitie@zonmw.nl> or via phone: +31 (0)70 349 50 50.

6.1.2 Technical questions about the web application ISAAC

For technical questions about the use of *My ZonMw*, please contact the ZonMw helpdesk. Please read the manual first before consulting the helpdesk. The ZonMw helpdesk can be contacted from Monday to Friday between 09:00 and 17:00 hours on +31 (0)70 349 5176. However, you can also submit your question by email to servicedesk@zonmw.nl.

6.2 Other information

The whole text of this Call for proposals has been published in both Dutch and English. The Dutch version is deemed authentic. For legal interpretation the text of the Dutch version will be decisive.

ZonMw processes data from applicants received in the context of this Call for proposals in accordance with the [ZonMw Privacy Statement](#).

7 Annexes

7.1 Information on 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) is optional.

Financing will occur according to the UNL tariffs, NFU or HOT- tariffs that are applicable at the moment of start of the project.

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

7.1.1 Module 1 Personnel (mandatory)

Module 1A: PhD student

A PhD student is appointed for 48 months for 1.0 FTE at a university in the Kingdom of the Netherlands, umc or research organisation as referred to in Article 1.1 of the NWO Grant Rules 2024. The equivalent of 48 full-time months, e.g. a 60-month appointment for 0.8 FTE, is also possible. If a project lasts less than 48 months, it is necessary for the dean or institute director to provide a written commitment to fund the remaining part of the PhD trajectory. It is not possible to apply for funding for a PhD student who started the project to be funded before the grant is awarded.

Please use the rates of a PhD student in the salary tables of UNL and NFU. A one-off personal bench fee of €5,000 is available for each PhD student to stimulate the scientific career.

Module 1B: Postdoc

A postdoc is appointed to a university in the Kingdom of the Netherlands, umc or research organisation as listed in Section 3.1. Use the rates of a senior academic employee in the salary tables of UNL, and the rates of a postdoc at an umc in the salary tables of NFU. It is not possible to apply for funding for a postdoc who started the project to be funded before the grant is awarded. Only a postdoc position with an appointment of at least 12 months for 0.5 fte qualifies as an appointment for which a one-off personal benchfee of €5,000 is available to boost the scientific career.

Module 1C: Physician-researcher

Funding may be requested for the appointment of a basic physician or physician-assistant as a physician-researcher to conduct scientific medical research at an umc. A physician-researcher is appointed for 1.0 FTE for a minimum of 36 and a maximum of 48 months. The equivalent of 36 or 48 full-time months, e.g. a 48 or 60-month appointment for 0.8 FTE, is also possible. It is possible to apply for a shorter appointment period in special situations. This must be properly justified. This will be assessed by the assessment committee. If a project lasts less than 48 months, it is necessary that the dean or institute to provide a written commitment to fund the remaining part of the PhD trajectory.

It is not possible to apply for funding for a physician-researcher who started the project to be funded before the grant is awarded.

Use the (medical) researcher rates in the NFU salary tables. For each physician-researcher, a one-off personal bench fee of €5,000 is available to stimulate the scientific career.

Module 1D: Other scientific personnel (OSP)

Per PhD candidate, postdoc or physician-researcher, 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 or 1c). 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 1E: Non-scientific personnel

Funding may be requested for non-scientific personnel (NWP) needed to execute the project. These may include, for example, programmers, technical assistants, analysts or project leaders. The use of NWP must be described in the proposal. The duration of the appointment cannot be longer than the duration of the project funded by ZonMw. Depending on the job level, a choice is made from the UNL or NFU salary tables for NWP-mbo, NWP-hbo and NWP-academic. No one-off personal benchfee is available for NWP.

Module 1F: Research leave

In this call, applicants can request the module research leave for applicants up to a maximum of 5% of the total requested budget. This module applies only to applicants based in the Netherlands. For each research leave position the following conditions apply:

This budget module allows funding to be applied for the costs of research leave for the main and/or co-applicant(s). This allows the relevant applicant's employer to cover the costs to relieve them from teaching, supervisory, administrative or management duties (not research duties). The applicant may only use the time relieved by this research leave for work on the project. The proposal must describe what project-related work the applicant(s) will perform during the exempted time.

ZonMw will fund the research leave on the basis of the salary rates of a senior academic employee (UNL) or postdoc (NFU) applicable at the time of the decision date.

Module 1G: Personnel of universities of applied sciences, educational institutions and other (research) organisations

Expenses up to a maximum of € 100.000 can be requested from this module.

Funding may be requested for personnel of universities of applied sciences, TO2 institutes, and other (research) organisations. The rates are determined using the Government Tariff Manual (HOT), Table 2 average total salary cost per salary scale, column 'Hourly rate productive hours, excluding VAT'. The salary scale of the requested position determines the rate from the HOT table.

For organisations that do not use the CAO of the Government of the Netherlands or similar (such as the CAOs of hbo, mbo, secondary education and local authorities), the following salary scales from the HOT apply: Project assistant: scale 6. Junior (researcher): scale 10. Medior (researcher): scale 12. Senior (researcher): scale 13. Director: scale 16.

Module 1H: Students

Students may be engaged in research. If the students contribute as part of their curriculum, the rate according to the usual internship fee of the university or universities of applied sciences applies. If students contribute as a secondary job alongside their studies as student assistants, the rate according to HOT table 2 scale 1 applies.

Module 1I: Scientific personnel at a research organisation abroad

Funding may be requested for personnel costs of a foreign research organisation contributing to the project up to a maximum of 50% of the requested budget without including the optional investment module. The foreign research organisation must meet the definition of research organisation in Article 5.1(p) of the NWO Grant Rules 2024.

Substantiate convincingly how the researcher of the foreign research organisation contributes specific expertise to the project which is not available in the Netherlands at the level required for the project. The assessment committee assesses this substantiation as part of the criterion Quality. This substantiation is not necessary when ZonMw/NWO has concluded a bilateral agreement on *Money Follows Cooperation* with the national research financier of the country where the foreign research organisation is located. The [NWO website](#) lists the research funders with which NWO has such an agreement. NWO does not award grants to co-applicants abroad who are subject to applicable sanction legislation.

The main applicant receives the grant and is responsible for transferring grant funds to the co-applicant's foreign research organisation and for accounting for the use of the foreign part of the grant. The exchange rate risk lies with the applicant. Benefits or expenses due to exchange rates are not eligible.

Use UNL rates adjusted for [country correction coefficients](#). These rates are maximums. No one-off personal benchfee is available.

If more than €125,000 per organisation is requested within this budget module, an audit certificate is required with the final financial statement.

Bilateral agreement 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.

7.1.2 Module 2 Material (mandatory)

Funding may be requested for all project-specific costs relating to, among others, consumables, purchase of services, materials, small instruments, access to (inter)national facilities, software and research resources that have no economic value after use. Travel and accommodation costs (national and international) for all people working on the project incl. foreign guest researchers, costs for the organisation of (international) workshops and symposia, costs for data management, publications, and costs in the context of citizen science also fall under this module.

Travel expenses (national and international) will only be reimbursed on the basis of second class/economy class fares. For publications, the provisions in Section 5.1.4 Open access apply. Costs for an audit statement can only be claimed for organisations that are not subject to OCW's education audit protocol for a maximum of €5,000 per audit statement.

It is not permitted to include costs for:

- organisational infrastructure and overhead, including a fully functioning workplace, accommodation, office automation, personnel administration, commuting expenses, training, facilities, HR advice and business care, documentary information provision and home office allowance;
- the use and maintenance of in-house developed scientific infrastructure;
- regular teaching activities;
- members of the guidance committee/user committee.

7.1.3 Module 3 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: Investmentmodule

This module is optional and can be used a maximum of once per application. Convincingly substantiate how the investment contributes to the project and is necessary. The assessment committee assesses this substantiation as part of the Investment Module criterion.

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 for the *ZonMw contribution* 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.

*Calculation example: your investment will cost a total of € 130,000. You enter this amount in the budget and specify it as the €97,500 ZonMw contribution requested and €32,500 co-financing. However, the subsidy requested from ZonMw for the investment is less than €100,000 and can therefore **not** be included in the investment module.*

If equipment will not be used for the proposed project during its entire lifetime, only the depreciation costs corresponding to the duration of the proposed project, calculated according to generally recognised accounting principles, are eligible for funding.

Investment costs should be adequately specified and justified in the proposal.

Eligible costs are:

- costs for investments in scientific equipment;
- costs for investments in datasets;
- salary costs for personnel with essential technical expertise necessary for the development or construction of an investment.

Ineligible are:

- costs for infrastructural facilities that can be considered part of the usual infrastructure full functioning workplace, accommodation, office automation, personnel administration, travel expenses commuting, training, facilities management, HR advice and business care, documentary information provision, home working allowance);
- data collections and any related software and bibliographies already available in other ways;
- other personnel costs, including personnel costs for operating and conducting research with the facility;
- costs for maintenance and use of equipment on a project. Costs for the use of equipment on a project can be requested through the material budget.

7.1.4 Module 4 Knowledge utilisation (mandatory)

Funding can be requested for activities that promote the use of knowledge from the research, in order to increase the societal impact of the research. It is possible to use a maximum of 5% of the subsidy amount for this module.

The aim of this module is to advance the proposed research as described under the Knowledge Utilisation and Participation criterion (see also section 4.3). 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).

7.2 Indexing

The rate at the time of the decision date applies. NWO will, if necessary, apply a one-off indexation of personnel costs when awarding the grant. The date on which the rates take effect is used for this purpose. If the date of publication of the fees is later than the effective date, the date of publication is used. The tariffs of the Universities of the Netherlands (UNL) usually take effect on 1 July, of the Dutch Federation of University Medical Centres (NFU) on 1 August and of the Government Tariffs Manual (HOT) on 1 January.

The on-off indexation does not affect the grant ceiling and the maximum grant amount to be applied for. The grant ceiling and maximum requestable grant amount remain unchanged during the assessment procedure. If awarded, one-off indexation will be applied to the grant amount.

If co-funding is required or permitted, the one-off indexation does not affect the requirements for own contributions and co-funding, nor the IP rights that may result from the co-funding.

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