

Conducting a systematic literature review of animal studies 2025

MORE KNOWLEDGE WITH FEWER ANIMALS

Date: Monday 6 January 2025

Deadline call for proposals: 15 December 2025, 14.00 CET



Colofon

Working with knowledge to boost good health for all. This goal defines everything ZonMw does. ZonMw programmes and funds research and innovation in health, healthcare and well-being, encourages the use of this knowledge and highlights knowledge needs.

Our main contractors are the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport and the Dutch Research Council. For more information on the More Knowledge with Fewer Animals programme, please contact the secretariat via e-mail mkmd@zonmw.nl or phone 070 349 50 30.

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1. Reading guide

This document is a translation of the Dutch version of this document. The following is to be considered an extra service for international applicants at Dutch research institutions. In case of any differences or other inconsistencies between the Dutch text and the English translation, the Dutch text is legally binding and prevails.

This grant call is the responsibility of ZonMw. In this grant call you can read what the purpose of the grant call is, how the application and assessment procedure is organised and what conditions the grant application must meet. In addition, this document provides an overview of the obligations that apply if your grant application is granted and how to contact us if you have any questions.

In this grant round, we use a different process. As a result, the process may differ from the one you are used to. We ask you to read chapter 5 'Assessment procedure' of the grant call carefully.



2. Core grant call

2.1. Goal

With the programme More Knowledge with Fewer Animals (Dutch acronym: MKMD), we encourage the development of new animal-free models and the acceptance and implementation of existing animal-free research methods. Where that is not (yet) possible, we focus on the more effective use of results from animal experiments.

The grant call 'Conducting systematic literature search animal studies' focuses on the effective use of results from animal studies by increasing their findability and reusability. This call for proposals encourages researchers to start their own systematic literature reviews in the field of animal research or non-animal innovations after attending the workshop 'Systematic literature review animal studies', organised by ZonMw-accredited experts. For how to organise a workshop, and the experts recognised by ZonMw, see the funding page on the [MKMD programme](#).

In carrying out the project, the researchers will be guided by ZonMw-accredited experts in systematic literature review of animal studies. This will ensure the quality of the systematic literature review.

The topics on which a systematic literature review can be carried out are very broad, as long as they are in the field of animal research or non-animal innovations. However, ZonMw also calls for special attention to the following topic:

Sex and gender in systematic literature review animal studies

Considering sex and gender in research ensures higher quality of research and more applicable and generalisable research results. In systematic literature reviews of animal studies (and non-animal innovations), one can think of ways in which sex and/or gender play a role. This could be, for instance, the sex of the laboratory animals used, the sex and gender of the caregiver(s) or the sex of the donor from which the cells used were derived.

If your systematic literature review focuses on sex and gender, please indicate this in the application form.

[Read more about sex and gender in research.](#)

2.2. Available budget

The maximum budget available for this call is € 500,000,-. This is the total grant budget. In this grant call an allowance for personnel costs, the costs of the necessary supervision and any open access costs can be applied for. The standard project duration is 24 months. The maximum amount that can be applied for per project is € 25,000,-. Grant applications can be submitted as long as the budget for the call has not been exhausted.

ZonMw may decide to open a supplementary grant call for awarded projects from this grant call, for example to further strengthen the practical application of the results.

2.3. Important dates

Applications for this call of proposal will be accepted on a rolling basis until 15 December 2025, 14:00 CET, and will be evaluated on a first-come, first-served basis. It is possible that the grant ceiling will be reached before the deadline. In this case the call will close earlier.

Action	Date
Submitting grant application	Continuous submission until 15 December 2025, 14:00 CET
Decision	Maximum 13 weeks from submission of application
Latest start date	Maximum 6 months after awarding

3. Background and context

3.1. The rationale

The call for proposals 'Conducting a systematic literature review of animal studies' focuses on the effective use of results from animal studies by improving their findability and reusability. A specific focus on non-animal innovations is also allowed. This grant call encourages researchers to start their own systematic literature review in the field of animal studies or non-animal innovations after attending the workshop 'Systematic literature review animal studies'.

The researchers will be guided by ZonMw-accredited experts in carrying out the systematic literature review. This ensures the quality of the systematic literature review. This literature review should result in a review article to be published open access in an international peer-reviewed scientific journal.

3.2. Impact

Our society faces major societal challenges. These are complex issues where the development and utilisation of knowledge is necessary to achieve solutions. This time of increasingly tight resources calls for an approach that allows us to make as much impact as possible with the resources we have. All ZonMw



programmes have a focus on achieving impact. This is done by setting conditions on quality and relevance of applications as well as final results. Within these conditions, a number of topics are defined that ZonMw considers important:

- Findable and reusable knowledge
- Diversity and equal participation
- User-oriented knowledge utilisation
- Future-proof society

4. Terms and conditions

When applying for a grant from ZonMw, the [General Grant Conditions Governing Grants of ZonMw 2024](#) and the [Approval of funding for scientific research](#) apply.

ZonMw assesses grant applications on the conditions described in this chapter. The grant application must also fit in with the objective as described in chapter 2.1.

4.1. Who can apply?

Researchers who have already obtained a doctorate or who are in the process of obtaining a doctorate at a Dutch institution can apply for a grant. The researcher must be employed by an organisation, a so-called public or private legal entity, established in the Netherlands.

- The performer of the systematic literature review is the main applicant and can apply for funding under this call for proposals.
- The main applicant is at least engaged in a PhD programme or has already obtained a PhD.
- The main applicant is also the project leader. If the main applicant is not yet a PhD candidate, the project leader must be the principal investigator (PI) of the underlying research project.

The systematic literature review will be carried out with the help of experts accredited by ZonMw to ensure the quality of the systematic literature review. One of the experts is part of the project team listed in section 2 (Co-applicants) of the ZonMw application form.

The line of research for which the systematic literature review is requested does not have to originate from a ZonMw- or NWO-funded project.

4.2. What can be applied for?

The following activities can be funded from the grant. You can also read here which activities are not eligible for subsidy:

- Only costs for activities incurred during the duration of the project are eligible.
- In this grant funding round, you can apply for a maximum of € 25,000,-. The standard duration is 24 months.
- This grant amounts to an allowance for personnel costs, supervision by ZonMw-accredited experts, and open-access publication costs.
- In this funding round you can apply for a maximum of € 10,000,- for an allowance for salary costs for the person conducting the literature review.
- The costs for Open Access publication should be included in the project budget under the item 'Open Access'. This is possible up to a maximum amount of € 5,000,- and is part of the total amount



requested. For more information, see chapter 5. The release of a publication from journals with a hybrid model will not be reimbursed;

- The costs of guidance of the project by a ZonMw-accredited expert will be reimbursed. An estimate of the number of supervision hours needed should be determined through an introductory meeting with the experts. The guidance hours should be included in the budget. The experts may invoice the costs for the planned guidance hours already at the beginning of the project.

Overview estimation guidance hours

Number of hours	Max. amount
5- 20 hours	Up to € 2.500,-
20-40 hours	Up to € 5.000,-
40-60 hours	Up to € 7.500,-
60-80 hours	Up to € 10.000,-

4.3. Specific terms

The following conditions apply specifically to this grant call and in the application form under the heading 'Beschrijf hoe de subsidieaanvraag aansluit op de subsidieoproep specifieke voorwaarden' should indicate the extent to which these conditions are met:

- The systematic literature review concerns scientific research using laboratory animals or non-animal innovations; specify in the application form which animal experiments or non-animal innovations are concerned.
- The ZonMw expert involved should agree with the method used for the literature review; indicate in the form which expert was contacted. Failure to do so may be grounds for early termination of the project and recovery of the grant;
- The person who performs the literature review should have participated in the '**Systematic Literature Review Animal Studies**' workshop provided by ZonMw-accredited experts before the start of the project. Please indicate in the application form the date of the workshop attended (or to be attended). For more information about this workshop and the conditions, please refer to the relevant grant page;

The following specific conditions are also applicable but do not need to be answered in the application form:

- It is mandatory to deliver a review article based on the systematic literature review conducted, which should be published according to the golden route Open Access in an international peer-reviewed scientific journal. This may be deviated from only if approved by an MKMD programme manager.
- A maximum of one project per main applicant may be carried out in this grant round. Therefore, only one grant application can be awarded per lead applicant. If you submit more than one grant application, only the first one submitted will be considered;
- Guidance by ZonMw-accredited experts throughout the project is mandatory to ensure the quality of the systematic literature review;
- If the expert's methodological input is of clear added value to the results and thus to the quality of the literature review, we ask that the supervision be recognised with a co-authorship for this expert on the resulting publication. This should be discussed prior to the start of the guidance;



- H. To ensure the reporting quality of animal research in systematic reviews, ZonMw expects researchers to work according to the PRISMA 2020 guidelines;
- I. To improve transparency and avoid unnecessary repetition of systematic literature reviews, registration of the study protocol and outcomes via PROSPERO is required. Should another platform for registration be applicable, this is also permitted in consultation with the expert involved;
- J. The Excel format 'Budget Other Institutions' should be used and includes costs for agreed guidance hours, personnel costs and open-access costs.

4.4. Preparing and submitting the grant application

The following conditions are related to preparing and submitting the grant application:

- Write your grant application in Dutch or English. Note: the application form is only available in Dutch.
- The following annexes are mandatory to add:
 - Budget according to the format 'Budget Other Institutions'. Make sure the budget is complete and correct. As the applicant, you are responsible for this. If the budget is not correct, the application does not meet the conditions and will be rejected.
- Fully submit the grant application in Mijn ZonMw before the deadline.

5. Assessment procedure

5.1. Procedure

Grant applications will be assessed in the order in which they are received. It may happen that the total available grant budget (the grant ceiling) is reached before the deadline. In this case, the call will close earlier and this will be announced on the ZonMw website.

5.1.1. Submit

To apply for funding in this grant call, please use [Mijn ZonMw](#). There, you fill in the application form and add the required attachments.

After you have prepared your grant application in Mijn ZonMw, you check whether the grant application is complete and correctly filled out. After this check, you submit the grant application. The date and time of submission determine the order of receipt. If the assessment shows that your submitted grant application is incomplete or contains inaccuracies, it will be rejected. If the grant call is still open for submission, you can re-submit a grant application. This means that the date and time of your resubmitted grant application will apply when determining the order of entry.

5.1.2. Assessment

Grant applications are assessed in order of receipt on the basis of quality and relevance criteria. ZonMw grant officers assess whether your grant application meets each assessment criterion. Only grant applications that meet all assessment criteria can be awarded.

5.1.3. Decision

Applicants receive a decision no later than 13 weeks after submitting the grant application. The decision describes whether the grant application is awarded or on the basis of which criteria the grant application is rejected.

5.2. Assessment criteria

5.2.1. Quality criteria

- Goal

The purpose of the grant application, intended results and end products are clearly described. The applicant has clearly described the purpose of the systematic literature review and substantiated the specific question. The intended outcomes and end products also include an explanation of the expected societal and scientific benefits and how this project may add value compared to already published reviews.

- Plan of action

The action plan describes:

- Activities/procedures/methods;
- Timeframe;



- Distribution of roles and tasks.

The plan of action is likely to achieve the objective. Give a detailed description of methods and analyses that fit the question, focusing on:

- The study population and data sources
- The description of the interventions
- Primary and secondary outcome measures
- Planned data analysis
- Attention to sex and gender at all relevant stages of the study
- Project group
The project group has the expertise needed to implement the project. It should be indicated which expertise is present in the research group and that an introductory meeting with a ZonMw-accredited expert was held beforehand to validate the approach.
- Budget
The budget describes who incurs what costs. These costs are proportional to the plan of action. The budget is consistent with the budget requirements in the grant call (sections 4.2 & 4.4). It clearly indicates the costs for personnel, guidance and publication.

5.2.2. Relevance criteria

- Alignment grant call
The grant application is in line with the objectives of the grant call. The applicant has made the connection between the systematic literature review and the objectives of the MKMD programme, explaining how the project promotes the findability and reusability of animal studies and/or non-animal alternatives.
- Target groups and stakeholders
Describe which target groups/stakeholders the project is relevant to. The applicant has specified how the project will support science and relevant societal target groups (e.g. research institutes, policy makers) by increasing the accessibility and reusability of existing animal study data and/or non-animal alternatives.
- Specific terms and conditions from the grant call
The grant application complies with the specific conditions in the grant call (see section 4.3). There is a clear point-by-point (A to C) description of how the application meets the specific grant conditions under the heading 'Describe how the grant application meets the grant call specific conditions'.

6. Follow-up and obligations

Directly after receiving a positive decision, the full grant amount will be transferred. You must fulfil the following obligations when implementing your project:

- Start and end date



The intended start date must be after the grant decision. Enter as intended start date a date at least 3 months after the application submission date. The project must start no later than 6 months after the decision is sent. Only in special cases can this be deviated from. Contact your contact person at ZonMw (see section 6.1) within 6 months.

- **Reporting obligation**
No progress reports are required for this grant. However, there is a consistent reporting requirement. This means that if there are any changes to the project or planning, you are obliged to report these changes to ZonMw in good time. You can do this by using the change form in Mijn ZonMw or by notifying the programme team via MKMD@zonmw.nl. If it is found that you have not fulfilled this obligation, the amount of your grant may be affected.
- **Proof of performance**
For this round of funding, grants are determined directly. The grant applicant is not required to keep financial records, but must keep records as evidence that the activities for which the grant was requested were performed as indicated in the application. For this call, this is a PDF, DOI or URL of the publication resulting from the systematic literature review. This will be requested upon completion of the project.
- **Reusable knowledge from grants**
ZonMw always requires, as a minimum, that scientific publications resulting from ZonMw grants are directly accessible to everyone under [Open Access](#) conditions. Project leaders, 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.

6.1. Impact report

After the end date of your project, you will be asked to report on the impact of your project. You will receive a task for preparing this impact report in [Mijn ZonMw](#).

7. Contact and other information

7.1. Contact

7.1.1. Substantive questions

For substantive questions about this grant call, contact:

- Contact programme team Annelies van Buuren
- Function Programme secretary
- Phone 070 349 5030
- E-mailadress mkmd@zonmw.nl.



7.1.2. Technical questions

For technical questions on the use of [Mijn ZonMw](#), ZonMw's online submission system, contact the service desk: Monday to Friday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., 070 349 51 78, servicedesk@zonmw.nl. Please include your telephone number in your e-mail so that we can contact you if necessary.

7.2. Downloads and links

On the ZonMw website you can read more about:

- [Budget formats](#)