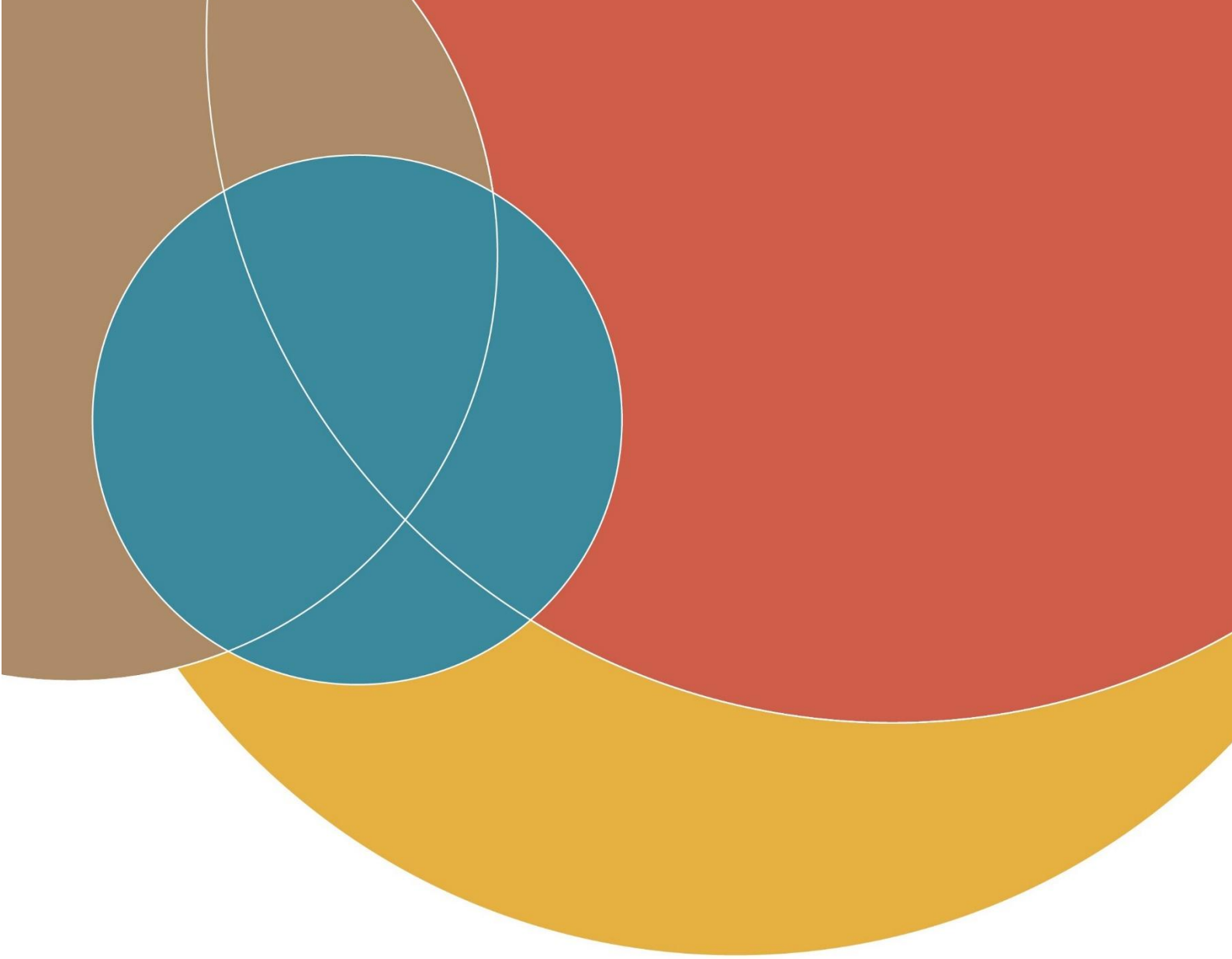




Rubicon

Call for proposals

2025-3

Science
Social Sciences and Humanities
Applied and Engineering Sciences
ZonMw

2025 3rd round



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1 Introduction

In this Call for proposals information is provided about the application procedure for the “Rubicon 2025, round 3” funding round. This Call for proposals falls under the responsibility of the Dutch Research Council (NWO).

In this Call for proposals you will find information about the aim of this programme (Chapter 2), the conditions for the grant application (Chapter 3) and 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 annexes.

1.1 Background

The Rubicon programme is directed at promising new postdoctoral researchers in the Kingdom of the Netherlands¹ who recently received their PhD and who are still at the start of their scientific careers, but whose scientific qualities give them the potential to become established figures in the scientific and academic landscape of the Kingdom of the Netherlands. The Rubicon grant stimulates this further development of academic talent and is regarded as a valuable step before a possible Veni application in the Talent Programme.

The programme offers researchers who recently obtained their PhD the opportunity to gain knowledge, skills and experience by spending up to two years at a scientific research institute outside the Kingdom of the Netherlands. In some cases, it is also possible to apply for a research period at a research institute in the Kingdom of the Netherlands.

1.2 Available budget

The available budget for this Call for proposals is €3,145,000. The available budget is divided in proportion to the number of eligible applications between the NWO domains mentioned below (see also paragraph 3.3.1):

1. Science (S) (combined with the AES domain)
2. Applied and Engineering Sciences (AES) (combined with the S domain)
3. Social Sciences and Humanities (SSH)
4. Health Research and Development (ZonMw).

Because of the limited number of applications within AES, these applications will be processed by S. Given the total amount of applications that is submitted in AES/S per round, two assessment committees will be installed for two clusters, ‘life’ and ‘bèta’. The budget available for this AES/S round, is distributed among the two committees based on the number of applications.

¹ The Kingdom of the Netherlands comprises the countries Aruba, Curaçao, the Netherlands and Sint Maarten and the special municipalities of Bonaire, Saba and Statia (Sint Eustatius) and consists of a Caribbean and a European Part. The Caribbean part consists of Aruba, Bonaire, Curaçao, Saba, Sint Maarten and Statia (Sint Eustatius); the European part consists of the Netherlands.

In this round, ZonMW functions as one of the NWO domains, and is therefore included in the references to 'NWO' in the Call.

1.3 Submission deadline(s)

When you submit your application in ISAAC or MijnZonMw, 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 full proposals is **Tuesday 2 December 2025**, before 14:00:00 hours CET (2 pm sharp).

1.3.1 Time zone

When contacting NWO or submitting a proposal from the Caribbean Part of the Kingdom, please bear in mind that all times mentioned in this Call for proposals pertain to the European Part of the Kingdom.

2 Aim

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

2.1 Aim of the programme

The Rubicon is a mobility grant that encourages talented researchers who have recently received their PhD to continue in academic research at a knowledge institute outside of the Kingdom of the Netherlands. The Rubicon offers them the opportunity to further develop themselves as independent researchers, by having new experiences in a different environment. This enables them to develop an own line of research and build an own network. Under certain conditions it is possible to apply for the Rubicon grant to be carried out at a knowledge institute within the Kingdom of the Netherlands (see paragraph 3.2.3).

2.1.1 Inviting female researchers

Female researchers are especially urged to apply. The representation and advancement of women in academia is unfortunately far less than that of men. NWO and the Dutch Ministry for Education, Culture and Science are committed to rectifying this situation and hope that knowledge institutes in the Kingdom of the Netherlands and the research institutes of KNAW and NWO will also strive to reach a percentage of female applicants which is at least comparable to the percentage of female researchers in the target group.

2.2 Societal impact

New knowledge and insights from scientific research can make an important contribution to developing solutions for the various issues society faces, including, amongst other things, the energy transition, health and care, or climate change. By facilitating greater interaction and alignment between researchers and potential knowledge users, the chance of knowledge utilisation increases, as well as the likelihood of generating societal impact. Societal impact here stands for changes that (partly) result from research-generated knowledge and skills. These changes contribute to the well-being of people, planet and society for this and future generations. Through its policy on impact, NWO promotes the potential contribution that research can make to societal issues by encouraging productive interactions with societal stakeholders, both during the development stage and the subsequent implementation of research. It does so in a manner that is in accordance with the aim of the particular funding instrument. NWO encourages researchers to reflect on the potential desired and undesired impact of their research from a broad perspective.

2.2.1 Tailor-made impact

Depending on the aim of the funding instrument, NWO chooses a corresponding approach that optimally supports opportunities for societal impact. The primary aim of the funding instrument determines the method that NWO will deploy to facilitate knowledge utilisation in various phases of the project (proposal, realisation, project completion) as well as the effort required from the applicant(s) and partner(s).

Aim

In this programme, the Impact Outlook approach is applied. Here, researchers can choose which type of impact they want to specifically focus on, while proportional consideration is also given to what can be done for the form of impact that was not chosen.

NWO offers an e-learning module that can help interested parties via Online impact workshops | NWO. For more information on our policy on impact, please visit the website: [Knowledge utilisation | NWO](#).

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 who received their PhD within the year preceding 2 December 2025, or are in the process of finalizing their PhD, can submit a proposal. Applicants who are still completing their PhD research may only submit an application if their supervisor approves the thesis (by means of a written declaration with the Rubicon application as described in section 3.3). This declaration guarantees that the supervisor expects the PhD-trajectory to be successfully completed before the starting date of the project. The researcher may start on the research as soon as the PhD is successfully completed, but no later than 6 months after the decision date.

The applicant must have obtained a PhD before the start of the project from a research organization mentioned below:

- Research universities, universities of applied sciences, as referred to in Article 1.8(1) of the Dutch Higher Education and Research Act, and the universities referred to in the [Policy Rules for Universities in the Kingdom of the Netherlands](#);
- University medical centres, as referred to in Article 1.13(1) of the Higher Education and Research Act.
- institutes affiliated with the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences and NWO;
- Netherlands Cancer Institute;
- Max Planck Institute for Psycholinguistics;
- Naturalis Biodiversity Center;
- Advanced Research Centre for NanoLithography (ARCNL);
- Princess Máxima Centre.

In case of a joint PhD, the research organisation where the degree is obtained and/or where the defence ceremony has taken place will be the measure of interpretation of this condition. If the PhD is obtained 'jointly' (i.e. a degree from two research organizations, or two degrees), the Dutch research organization can be considered the main organization.

In determining when the PhD is successfully completed, the date from which the applicant is allowed to carry the title of doctor is leading. If the date of the defence and the date from which the applicant is allowed to carry the title of doctor are more than six months apart, the date of the defence is leading.

Each applicant may only apply to the Rubicon programme once. An application is considered to have been submitted when NWO decides that it is admissible for the selection procedure (as described in paragraph 4.2.2). It is permitted to submit a Rubicon application and another application in the Talent programme simultaneously

3.2 What can be applied for

Applicants can apply for a stay of at least 12 months and no longer than 24 months at an academic research institute outside the Kingdom of the Netherlands. In some cases, there is an opportunity to apply for a research period of at least 12 months and no longer than 24 months at a knowledge institute in the Kingdom of the Netherlands (see paragraph 3.2.2). A part-time appointment is possible, up to a minimum of 0.75 FTE in 32 months.

The size of the grant depends on the country where the host institute is situated and the length of the stay. The size of the grant is determined according to a basic payment of 84,000 euros per 12 months and a list of correction coefficients per country. On top of this, the grant includes 276 euros per month for research costs. Moreover, NWO covers travel costs; once if the stay is 12 months and twice if the stay is longer than 12 months. More information on calculating the grant can be found in paragraph 7.1. The grant is a compensation towards the costs of the research and the stay abroad but does not always offer complete coverage of the costs. Applicants are therefore encouraged to discuss salary costs with their prospective host institute ahead of time.

Eligible for funding are salary costs for the researcher, including the related social charges (contributions paid by the employer to the government), research costs and travel expenses. Cost for infrastructure (housing and IT) and costs related to overhead are not eligible for funding. See also paragraph 5.1.7.

The Rubicon grant can be regarded as a 'fellowship'. NWO considers a 'fellowship' to be a grant for postdoctoral research obtained through competition, to be carried out during a period that is determined beforehand.

For all Rubicon grants, the host institute should state in the acceptance form that it is willing to offer the applicant facilities for at least the duration of the research, so the applicant can carry out the research, and that it shall appoint the researcher for at least the duration of the grant in case the applicant is not employed by a knowledge institute in the Kingdom of the Netherlands. A Rubicon grant does not constitute a contract of employment with NWO.

The Rubicon research should be conducted over an uninterrupted period.

3.2.1 Country, institute and employment

Applicants can apply for a Rubicon grant for a stay in the country where they obtained their master's degree (or an equivalent) but cannot apply for a stay at the institute where they obtained their master's degree.

Applicants may not combine a stay in the Kingdom of the Netherlands with a stay abroad, nor combine stays at two knowledge institutes abroad.

The researcher conducts the Rubicon research at a single host institute. Depending on the research subject, external data collection or field research may be approved.

Conditions for applicants

On day of the deadline of this Call for proposals, applicants may have been conducting research at the host institute after the PhD period (the PhD defence does not have to have taken place yet) for a period equivalent to no more than six months fulltime. You can apply for an extension to this cut-off point based on caring responsibilities, long-term illness and/or training as a clinical specialist. The calculation of this extension will be done in the same way as the extension to the cut-off point for months post- PhD. Please get in touch before the deadline at rubicon@nwo.nl for any extensions.

The applicant can choose one of the following options for appointment: either be employed at a Dutch knowledge institute and seconded to the host institute, or directly appointed by the host institute, regardless of the destination. The applicant's choice has no influence on the assessment of the proposal.

NWO does not award grants to knowledge institutes abroad who are subject to (inter)national sanction laws and regulations. For guidance in this respect, we refer to the [EU Sanctions Map](#).

3.2.2 Research outside of the Kingdom of the Netherlands

Appointment at host institute

In case the researcher opts for an appointment at a foreign institute (i.e. outside of the Kingdom of the Netherlands), this foreign institute will appoint the researcher for the duration of the fellowship under at least comparable conditions to those that apply to an average postdoc at the host institute. The applicant must be able to show that the research organization which is the beneficiary of the grant fulfils the definition of a research organisation as described in article 5.1(b) of the NWO Grant Rules. At the time of submission, NWO may request additional information about the host institute that demonstrates the above.

By filling out the applicable acceptance form, the host institute indicates to accept the researcher in case the grant is awarded. This form, however, is not a guarantee for actual acceptance as it only comes into effect if the application is granted and the required legal documents are obtained. It remains the applicant's responsibility to acquire all required legal documents (e.g. visa, work permits etc.) in time.

The regulation "Approval of funding for scientific research" (2008) does not apply here.

Secondment to host institute

In case the researcher opts for an appointment at a knowledge institute in the Kingdom of the Netherlands, this institute will manage the grant and second the researcher to the host institute abroad. The employment conditions of the employing knowledge institute are then applicable. The host institute guarantees that it will enable the applicant to carry out the proposed research at the institution in accordance with the Rubicon conditions. By filling out the applicable acceptance form, both the receiving host institute and the seconding institute indicate that they will accept the researcher in case the grant is awarded. This form, however, is not a guarantee for actual acceptance by the host institute as it only comes into effect if the application is granted, and the required legal documents are obtained. It remains the applicant's responsibility to acquire all required legal documents (e.g. visa, work permits etc.) in time.

The regulation "Approval of funding for scientific research" (2008) does not apply here.

3.2.3 Research in the Kingdom of the Netherlands

In some cases, Rubicon offers a possibility to apply for a research period within the Kingdom of the Netherlands, primarily designated for applications that focus on topics and disciplines that are specific for the Kingdom, e.g. languages and cultures of the Kingdom of the Netherlands and local law.

For applications for research at a knowledge institute in the Kingdom of the Netherlands, applicants may not apply for a Rubicon grant to conduct research at the knowledge institute where they obtained their Master's degree or PhD.

The host institute in the Kingdom of the Netherlands will act as the employer and NWO will pay it a grant of 84,000 euros per 12 months/full time. On top of this the grant includes 276 euros per month for research costs. Travel costs cannot be applied for, unless an applicant in the European part applies for a stay in the Caribbean part of the Kingdom, and vice versa. NWO will not act as the employer and regulation "Approval of funding for scientific research 2008" will not apply.

The following knowledge institute in the Kingdom of the Netherlands are eligible as a host institute for Rubicon:

Caribbean part:

- University of Aruba;
- University of Curaçao;
- University of Sint Maarten.

European part:

- Universities affiliated with UNL;
- University medical centres;
- 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.

3.3 Preparing an application

The steps involved in writing your application are:

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

Compulsory annexes (forms available in ISAAC and on the NWO website):

- appropriate acceptance form (depending on the chosen way of employment, see section 3.2);
- in case the applicant has not been awarded a PhD yet: Manuscript approval form.

Conditions for applicants

The signed acceptance form guarantees that the applicant has informed the host institute where he/she will be employed about the application, and that the host institute accepts the grant conditions of this Call for proposals.

The application form lists additional instructions on how to write your application.

The appendices must be drawn up in accordance with the templates provided by NWO. Annexes must be uploaded in ISAAC (NWO) or MijnZonMw (ZonMw) separately from the application. All annexes must be submitted as PDF files (without encryption). Any annexes other than those stated above are not permitted.

You must write your application in English.

The use of generative AI is not excluded when preparing your proposal, provided that this is done in a responsible manner. The guidelines can be found on the website ([NWO policy on the use of generative artificial intelligence \(GAI\) | NWO](#)).

An application can only be submitted via the web application ISAAC (NWO) or MijnZonMw (ZonMw). Applications that are not submitted via ISAAC or MijnZonMw will not be taken into consideration. As the main applicant, you are required to submit the application via your own personal ISAAC or MijnZonMw account.

It is important to start with your application in ISAAC on time:

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

Applications submitted after the deadline will not be taken into consideration by NWO. For technical questions, please contact the ISAAC or MijnZonMw helpdesk, see contact (Chapter 6).

Does the applicant work for an organisation that is not included in the ISAAC or MijnZonMw database? You can report this via relatiebeheer@nwo.nl so that the research organisation can be added. This will take several days. It is therefore important that you report this at least one week before the deadline.

3.3.1 Advice about field choice

For this Call for proposals, you must choose which field you will submit your application to. You can choose from:

- Applied and Engineering Sciences (AES);
- Science (S);
- Social Sciences and Humanities (SSH);
- ZonMw (Health Research and Medical Sciences).

Please decide well in advance to which field it would be best to submit your application to. After submission, your choice of field is final, and it will no longer be possible to have the application assessed within another field. If you have doubts about which field would be most appropriate, for example, because your application has a (partly) field-overarching character, then you should get in touch with the contact points below well before the deadline. These policy officers can advise you about which field can best deal with your application. Please note that the final choice is yours.

For advice, please get in touch with the following people:

ENW/TTW: enwrubicon@nwo.nl (Yee Wah Lau en Eric Paps)

SGW: rubicon.alfagamma@nwo.nl (Vera Michilsen en Simone Teerink)

ZonMw: rubicon@zonmw.nl (Maik Kok en Nilda Tapita)

Whilst writing your proposal, please keep in mind that the proposal will be assessed by a broad committee. The proposal should be accessible to committee members from other scientific disciplines within the chosen field.

3.4 Conditions for submission

3.4.1 Formal conditions for submission

NWO will assess your application against all conditions listed 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, NWO requests you to be available to implement any possible administrative corrections so that you can (still) meet the conditions for submission.

These conditions are:

- the applicant meets the conditions stated in Section 3.1;
- the applicant meets the conditions stated in Section 3.2 and 3.3;
- the application complies with the DORA guidelines as described in Section 4.1;
- the application form is, after a possible request to make additions or changes, complete and filled out according to the instructions;
- the application is submitted via the applicant's ISAAC or MijnZonMW-account;
- the application is received before the deadline;
- the application is written in English;
- the application budget is drawn up in accordance with the conditions for this Call for proposals (see section 5.1.7);
- the proposed project has a duration of at least 12 and at most 24 months full time, and at most 32 months with the proportionate equivalent;
- all required annexes (described in paragraph 3.3 of this Call), 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

3.4.2 Career-dependent submission and extension scheme

This round is open to researchers who obtained their PhD at most one year before 2 December 2025.

The stated maximum career-dependent submission period can be extended by NWO if there was a long period of leave due to illness, parenting, pregnancy or care. The maximum extension to the submission period allocated by NWO is one year.

An extension is also possible for parents who take care of one or more children. An extension is also possible in the case of a part-time appointment combined with care duties or in the case of training for a number of clinical specialisations. In the case of care leave combined with a training to be a clinical specialist, the extension allocated is also a maximum of one year. 11 Chapter 3: Conditions for applicants

For more information, see www.nwo.nl/en/extension-clause. If you would like to make use of the extension scheme, then you should always contact NWO (see Section 6.1) before you submit your proposal

3.4.3 Parental leave

For instruments in which no co-applicants can be included, NWO offers applicants who take parental leave during the assessment period due to the arrival of a child the possibility to make use of the 'Compensation scheme for parental leave'. This scheme applies to this Call for proposals. For more information, please see: <https://www.nwo.nl/en/compensation-scheme-parental-leave>.

If an applicant wishes to make use of this compensations scheme, they must submit a written request, supported by reasons, to NWO via the contact person for this funding round. In this request, the applicant should provide all information that NWO needs to take a decision, including information showing that the applicant is hindered from providing input due to parental leave.

3.5 Conditions on granting

The [NWO Grant Rules 2024](#) are applicable to all applications.

3.5.1 Employment

Rubicon research may be conducted on a part-time basis, provided that the time the applicant devotes to it amounts to at least 75% of the normal 40-hour working week. If less than 100% of the time is devoted to Rubicon research, then the grant shall be proportionately reduced, or the grant period extended in accordance with the percentage reduction in the working hours. For example, if someone applies for a project of 24 months fulltime, the project may also be conducted in 30 months for 0,8 fte. The research costs will be calculated based on the number of fulltime months that would be spent on the project, so in this case, 24 months. If one wants to complete the project in 24 months working 0,75fte, the grant amount will be equal to 18 months fulltime, and research costs will be paid fulltime for 18 months.

Both the institute at which the project is carried out and the institute at which the applicant is employed (in case of secondment) are allowed to contribute financially to the project if the grant is not sufficient to cover salary expenses and/or research costs. Contributions from the institute do not affect the costs that NWO (partly) covers and do not qualify as co-funding, they are additional contributions from the institute to the project. Applicants who expect to receive other funding should always contact the Rubicon programme coordinator.

NWO guarantees the continued payment of the salary during pregnancy leave in accordance with legislation in the European part of the Kingdom for a maximum period of 16 weeks for biological mothers and 5 weeks for fathers and non-biological mothers. If a foreign knowledge institute or a knowledge institute in the Caribbean part of the Kingdom employs the applicant, in principle the relevant regulations of the host institute apply. In the case that there are no regulations in place at the host institute, or the regulations are less favourable than those in the European part of the Kingdom, NWO will continue payment of the salary, or supplement the salary, for a maximum of 16 (or 5) weeks.

Should you wish to make use of this regulation for continued payment of the salary during pregnancy leave, please contact NWO (rubicon@nwo.nl).

To process your request, NWO needs the following information:

- date(s) of the pregnancy leave;
- the type of employment (if parttime, how many FTE);
- a signed letter from the host institute.

This letter serves as a confirmation of the existing regulation and as confirmation that you can continue your research after your leave. Deviations from the existing regulation must be described in the letter from the host institute.

It is mandatory to be based in the country of the host institute during the course of the project.

3.5.2 Starting date

The research should start within the 6 months following the date of the formal decision about the round by the Board.

3.5.3 Knowledge Security

In the National Knowledge Security Guidelines, the Dutch knowledge sector (including NWO) and various government departments have laid down guidelines for those within research organisations who are involved in international collaboration and who need to weigh up the opportunities and (security) risks involved. Self-regulation by the knowledge sector is central to the approach to knowledge security within the Netherlands.

NWO expects applicants to comply with the knowledge security policy of their research organisation. If NWO receives indications that a proposal or an allocated project entails knowledge security risks, NWO may request the applicant or project leader to provide insight into the risk mitigation measures. In

addition, NWO may decide to include further conditions in the award letter to protect knowledge security.

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

3.5.4 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. NWO expects that research data resulting from NWO-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 are at least expected to make the data and/or non-numerical results that underlie the conclusions of work published within 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 during the creation of data and analysis of the data, to make its later 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.

3.5.5 Scientific integrity

In accordance with the NWO Grant Rules, 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](#).

3.5.6 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 institute 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 NWO has received a copy of the ethical statement or licence.

3.5.7 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.

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

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](#)). NWO encourages members of assessment committees to be actively aware of implicit associations and to try to minimise these. NWO will provide them with information about concrete ways of improving the assessment of an application.

4.1 The San Francisco Declaration (DORA)

NWO 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, NWO makes use of a broad definition of scientific output.

NWO requests committee members 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 NWO is implementing the principles of DORA, see [DORA | NWO](#).

4.2 Procedure

The application procedure consists of the following steps:

- submission of the proposal;
- admissibility of the proposal;
- initial advice from the assessment committee;
- assessment committee meeting;

- decision-making.

The fields Science, SSH and ZonMw will each install an external, independent, and multidisciplinary assessment committee for this Call for proposals, consisting of representatives from academia with knowledge of the field at hand. While writing the pre-proposal, please keep in mind that the committee that will evaluate your preproposal consists of members from a broad range of disciplines. The pre-proposal should be accessible for committee members from other academic disciplines within your domain. Due to the limited number of applications submitted to the AES field, these proposals will be assessed in the Science domain. Proposals submitted in the Rubicon AES/Science will be divided over the panels Life Sciences and Beta, based on the description of the research and the area of expertise of the researcher.

The task of the assessment committee is to assess the applications, and the relevant documents submitted, in conjunction with each other and on each application's own merit, based on the assessment criteria given in this Call for proposals.

Due to both the expertise present in the assessment committee and the small size of the grant, NWO has decided with regard to the assessment of these applications to exercise the option outlined in Article 2.2.4, paragraph 2, of the NWO Grant Rules, to assess all applications without involving referees.

4.2.1 Submission of a proposal

For the submission of the proposal, a standard form is available on the funding page of this Call for proposals on the NWO 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 ISAAC (NWO) or MijnZonMw (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.

4.2.2 Admissibility of the proposal

As soon as possible after you have submitted your proposal, you will hear from NWO whether your proposal will be taken into consideration. NWO will determine this based on several administrative-technical criteria (see the formal conditions for submission, Section 3.4). NWO can only take your proposal into consideration if it meets these conditions.

Please bear in mind that within two weeks after the submission deadline, NWO 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.

4.2.3 Pre-advice assessment committee

After this, your proposal 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. 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).

4.2.4 Meeting of the assessment committee

The assessment committee formulates its own evaluation based on the available material. During this process, the preliminary assessments written by the pre-advisers (pre-advice) largely guide the plenary discussion of the proposals by the assessment committee. However, the committee does not wholly or indiscriminately follow the pre-advice during the committee’s assessments; the committee weighs the arguments of the pre-advisors (and weighs them side by side).

Following the discussion, the committee draws up a written recommendation addressed to the appropriate board² about the quality and ranking of the proposals. This recommendation is based on the assessment criteria. The proposal must receive an overall qualification of at least “excellent/very good” to be eligible for the funding.

For more information about the qualifications, see [Applying for funding, how does it work? | NWO](#).

If, after the discussion of the full proposals, two or more of the full proposals cannot be distinguished from each other based on their weighted total score, this means that there is an ex aequo situation (see paragraph 4.2.5).

Ranking at AES/Science

If, within the two clusters, the residual budget of the relevant budget for that cluster is insufficient to award the next proposal in the corresponding cluster, and the collective residual budget of the clusters is sufficient to allocate one additional proposal, the board of the NWO domain Science may decide, for the purpose of optimising the use of the budget per package, to allocate these remaining budgets. Proposals concerned are those two proposals in the two clusters that ended up directly 'below the selection border' in the priority of their respective cluster and hence could not be awarded within the budget of that cluster. The remaining budget of both clusters will then be divided according to the following rules:

1. If the collective remaining budget from both clusters is sufficient, the proposal next-in-line in the cluster with the lowest percentage of granted proposals will be awarded. The percentage of granted proposals is determined based on the number of proposals to be awarded in a cluster relative to the total number of proposals per cluster. The percentages of granted proposals are rounded to whole numbers.

² Depending on the board to which you submit your proposal: the Science Board, the SSH board or ZonMw Board.

2. If the percentages of granted proposals are the same for both clusters, the proposal next-in-line in the cluster with the lowest total allocated cluster budget will be awarded. If the remaining budget is insufficient for this proposal, the proposal next-in-line from the other cluster will be awarded.

4.2.5 Ex aequo

NWO 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 for proposals close to the boundary of the available budget or the selection boundary. The existence of an ex aequo situation is determined as follows. The starting point is the ranking drawn up by the assessment committee, with the final scores rounded down to two decimal points. The reference score is the score of the lowest-ranked proposal within the boundary of the available budget or the selection boundary. All proposals with a score that is within 0.05 or less of the reference score will be considered.

Subsequently, the proposals that are equal within a score of 0.1 will be selected. If an ex aequo situation occurs at the borders of available budget or the selection borders, the committee will first determine whether the applications are ex aequo based on quality. If the applications are considered ex aequo, in order to help increase the number of women working in the scientific field, the proposal from a female applicant will end 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 applicant' will be ranked 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 proposal' will be ranked highest. If the proposals subsequently still remain tied, then 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). If these measures do not provide a resolution, or if this is not the desired solution, then the ex aequo situation will be sent onto the decision-making body.

4.2.6 Decision-making

Finally, the appropriate board will assess the procedure followed as well as the advice from the assessment committee. They will subsequently determine the final qualifications and take a decision about which proposals will be awarded the grant.

4.2.7 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 receive a timely notification about this.

Proposals

2 December 2025 at 14:00:00 hrs. (2 pm) CET	Deadline proposals
Beginning of December 2025	Notification about whether a proposal is taken into consideration
December 2025/January 2026	Pre-advice assessment committee

January/February 2026	Meeting assessment committee
March 2026	Decision by the appropriate board
Beginning of April 2026	NWO informs applicant about the decision
6 months after decision date of the Board	Latest possible starting date for research

4.3 Criteria

4.3.1 Substantive assessment criteria

The applications submitted within this Call for proposals will be substantially assessed based on the following criteria:

1. Quality of the applicant (30%)
 - The extent to which the researcher's qualities clearly exceed what is customary within the international peer group, as evidenced in the CV by the quality and impact of the key output, and the acceptance form of the host institute;
 - the extent to which the applicant's work is clearly positioned with respect to scientific and (where possible) societal themes or questions;
 - the quality of the (inter)national network, collaborative abilities, and visibility of the researcher;
 - the extent to which the researcher demonstrates the capability of generating innovative ideas;
 - the extent to which the application aligns with the expertise of the applicant, or to what extent the applicant presents a convincing vision on how the alignment will be achieved.
2. Quality of the proposal (30%)
 - The extent to which the proposed research has the potential to make an important contribution to the advancement of science³;
 - the extent to which the proposed research contains (elements of) scientific innovation in terms of theory, methods and/or topic;
 - whether the proposed research strikes an equitable balance between being challenging and feasible⁴;
 - the extent to which the proposed approach is appropriate;
 - the clarity of the proposal, including question(s) posed and the objectives.
3. Quality of the host institute in the context of match between the applicant/proposal and the host institute (30%)

³ NWO uses a broad definition of the term science, which includes technology, clinical research and scholarship.

⁴ Aspects of feasibility that can be assessed include the suitability of the network, the logical and technological framework, planning and timetable, and resources, such as the appointment of personnel, data, tools and technology. NWO is amenable to the selection of high risk – high gain projects. The duration of the stay should be in proportion to the work to be done.

Assessment procedure

- The extent to which the host institute, including the research group and direct supervisor, offer the applicant a stimulating research environment for the applicant and the research proposal and contribute to the development of the applicant as a researcher;
- the presence and suitability of the scientific infrastructure and facilities at the host institute;
- the extent to which the proposed research fits in with the existing research line(s) at the host institute;
- the extent to which the location of the host institute and research group is fitting for the proposed research.

The quality of the host institute and the research group will be considered in relation to the proposed research.

4. Scientific and/or societal impact (10%)

Applicants can choose to focus in their research project on scientific impact, societal impact, or a spread across both forms of impact.

NWO assesses scientific impact as follows:

- a. whether the proposal conveys an ambitious vision and appropriate strategy regarding the dissemination and/or implementation of the research results in one's own discipline, related disciplines and the broader scientific field.

NWO assesses societal impact as follows:

- a. The extent to which the project has added value for societal impact (definition:⁵);
- b. the extent to which the project has potential for societal impact in the short and long term;
- c. whether the proposal conveys an ambitious vision and appropriate strategy regarding the way(s) in which the proposed research may lead to societal impact.

In addition to the above, the assessment committee, as part of this criterion, will also weigh:

- a. the extent to which the motivation for the focus on scientific impact and/or societal impact is convincing;
- b. If the focus is primarily on scientific impact: how proportional attention is given during the course of the project to increasing (unforeseen) opportunities for social impact;
- c. If the focus is primarily on societal impact: how proportional attention is given during the course of the project to increasing (unforeseen) opportunities for scientific impact.
- d. Sufficient attention to the key risks of undesirable societal impact and the proposed measures to prevent or mitigate this and increase the chance of desired impact.

It is possible to receive a good score for this criterion if the focus of the proposal is on scientific impact, if the focus is on societal impact, and if the focus is spread across both types of impact. The score for this criterion is given independently from the chosen focus; one type of impact is not superior to the other.

⁵ Societal impact here stands for societal (cultural, economic, industrial, ecological or social) changes that (partly) result from research-generated knowledge and skills. These changes contribute to the well-being of people, planet and society for this and future generations.

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 Starting date

A research project that has been awarded funding must start within 6 months after the decision date. You must send the completed and signed Rubicon Notification of Starting Date (attached to the reward letter) to NWO, four weeks before the starting date. The host institute must sign the form to confirm that the laureate is to be employed and/or will stay at that institute for at least the duration of the research described in the application. The research should be conducted over an uninterrupted period. Please see paragraph 5.1.2 for sending in the data management plan and paragraph 3.5.6 for the Ethical statement (if applicable).

In case you did not yet receive your PhD when you submitted your proposal, please note that your research can only start after you have received your PhD, taking into account the latest possible starting date (see above)

5.1.2 Data management

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, NWO advises the applicant to check the data management plan with 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](#).

5.1.3 Intellectual property

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

Applicants must carry out a project funded by NWO during the time that they work for the knowledge institute. If an applicant or a researcher funded by NWO is appointed by more than one employer, then the other employer should relinquish any possible intellectual property (IP) rights that emerge from the project of the applicant. With respect to intellectual property, the NWO IP policy applies. This can be found in Chapter 4 of the NWO Grant Rules.

In case the research is carried out in the European part of the Kingdom, the IP-rights will be vested to the beneficiary of the grant (or the knowledge institute). In case the research is carried out at a knowledge institute (i.e. the host institute) in the Caribbean part of the Kingdom or outside of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, the applicable local patent laws determine how intellectual property rights are established on knowledge and expertise. In case of secondment, NWO advises the employing institute to establish an agreement on this issue with the host institute.

In order not to obstruct the career opportunities of the researcher, in particular the possibility to publish on the results of the research, the knowledge institute in the Caribbean part of the Kingdom or outside of the Kingdom confirms to the researcher in writing that adequate access is guaranteed to these results, and, when applicable, provides adequate licence to IP rights with respect to the results of the research.

5.1.4 Socially responsible licencing

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”](#).

5.1.5 Open Access

As a signatory to the Berlin Declaration (2003) and a member of cOAlition S (2018), NWO is committed to making the results of the research it funds openly accessible via the internet (Open Access). By doing this, NWO gives 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 as research 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](#).

5.1.6 Payments

Payment of the awarded amount shall be made to the institute of employment in equal instalments every 6 months. This knowledge institute is the beneficiary of the grant. This can be a foreign knowledge institute (when the applicant is directly employed by the host institute) or the institute in the Kingdom of the Netherlands managing the project (in case of a secondment).

The first payment for travel expenses to your destination will be transferred to your account, well before your departure (see Notification of Starting Date). If your stay is to last 12 months or longer, a second payment for travel expenses will be made. This amount shall be paid into your account during the last quarter of your research period.

When transferring the tranches and determining the amount of the tranches, indexation or exchange rates are not taken into account. In addition, the total salary budget must be used to cover the appointment and salary costs for the entire duration of the project.

5.1.7 Costs

The host institute uses the grant to pay your salary, including the social obligations. You may use the budget for research costs for publication costs, additional travel and accommodation costs for work and congress visits during the grant period, and for any other costs associated with the Rubicon research. When the salary and social obligations (including fringe benefits) do not fully consume the Rubicon basic amount because of rates in the host country, the surplus must be used for research costs or salary. After receiving the final instalment, the host Institute must recalculate the salary in order to fully spend the Rubicon.

It is not permitted to use the grant to pay for overhead, administration costs, salary payments during pregnancy leave or sick leave or the employment of any other personnel than the laureate her/himself. For maternity leave please see paragraph 3.5.1.

5.1.8 Stopping before the project is completed

In case of a possible premature discontinuation of the project, NWO will decide if the grant should be (partly) returned. If the laureate is unable, either fully or partly, to complete the planned research or comply with the NWO's terms and conditions due to illness or other causes, NWO can withdraw the grant or, if payments have already been made, stop further payments, with retrospective effect if necessary. If the researcher is abroad or in the overseas part of the Kingdom at the time when the grant is withdrawn or payments are stopped, the costs of the return journey will be paid by NWO.

In case of temporary cessation of the project due to maternity leave the project will be extended in proportion to the duration of the maternity leave.

5.1.9 Reporting obligations

No progress reports are required for Rubicon projects. Therefore art. 3.3.1 (1) and art. 3.3.1 (2) of the NWO Grant Rules are not applicable to Rubicon projects. Within thirteen weeks of the end of the research period, NWO expects a short final report (maximum two pages of A4, excluding references and publications) of the activities carried out, the results of your research, and your experiences while conducting the Rubicon research. NWO will send you a request to submit the final report, together with a form for drafting it.

5.1.10 Final statement of accounts

Within thirteen weeks of the end of the grant period, the knowledge institute abroad or in the Caribbean part of the Kingdom must submit a financial accounting report for the research conducted by the laureate. For the Rubicon grant, a statement from the host institute that the researcher was appointed to conduct the Rubicon research for the period stated is sufficient; this statement also needs to be signed by the laureate. Any remainder of the grant is to be reimbursed to NWO.

In case the grant has been managed by a knowledge institute in the European part of the Kingdom, the regular audit specified in the university education audit guidelines issued by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science applies. NWO reserves the right to request additional information for the financial accounting report, regardless of where the research was carried out. Art. 3.5.2 (1b) is not applicable to Rubicon projects.

6 Contact and other information

6.1 Contact

6.1.1 Specific questions

For specific questions about this Call for proposals, please contact:

NWO – Dutch Research Council

PO Box 93138

2509 AC Den Haag

Telephone: +31 (0)70 344 09 23

Email: rubicon@nwo.nl

6.1.2 Technical questions about the web application ISAAC

For technical questions about the use of **ISAAC** (NWO) please contact the ISAAC helpdesk. Please read the manual first before consulting the helpdesk. The ISAAC helpdesk can be contacted from Monday to Friday between 10:00 and 17:00 hours on +31 70 34 40 600. However, you can also submit your question by email to isaac.helpdesk@nwo.nl. You will then receive an answer within two working days.

For technical questions about the use of **MijnZonMw** (ZonMW) please contact the MijnZonMw helpdesk. The MijnZonMw helpdesk can be contacted from Monday to Friday between 08:00 and 17:00 hours CE(S)T on +31 70 349 51 78. However, you can also submit your question by e-mail to servicedesk@zonmw.nl. Please leave your e-mail or phone number so, if necessary, you can be contacted.

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.

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

NWO might approach applicants for an evaluation of the procedure and/or research programme.

7 Annexes

7.1 Standard payments

7.1.1 Standard payments outside of the Kingdom of the Netherlands

The payment for a period outside of the Kingdom of the Netherlands depends on the destination chosen and has three components: a basic amount, travel costs and research costs. It is not possible to apply for any other allowances than the three components described above.

NWO cannot provide any information about the fiscal aspects of this expenses allowance. You should contact your local tax inspector about this.

Research costs

The remuneration for research costs is 276 euros per month for all laureates. In case of a part-time appointment, research costs will be based on the number of months that a fulltime appointment of the same research time would be (see paragraph 3.5.1).

Travel costs

The travel costs are based on a distance in a straight line (as the crow flies) between Amsterdam (the Netherlands), the Bottom (Saba), Kralendijk (Bonaire), Oranjestad (Aruba), Oranjestad (Sint Eustatius), or Willemstad (Curaçao), and the host institute. For a period of 12 months the travel costs are awarded once, and for a period longer than 12 months the travel costs are awarded twice. The travel costs shall be paid directly to the laureate.

Distance (km)	Fixed allowance per 12 months (EUR)
< 500	250
500 – 1,000	500
1,000 – 1,500	750
1,500 – 2,500	1,000
2,500 – 5,000	1,500
5,000 – 10,000	2,000
> 10,000	2,500

In case an application will be granted an award, NWO will check the travel distance from the point of departure in the Kingdom of the Netherlands to the host institute using the following website <http://www.distancecalculator.net>. The results of this calculation will determine the travel allowance to be awarded. NWO advises applicants to use this website to calculate the travel allowance.

Basic amount

The basic amount is initially designated for the salary of the researcher and the corresponding social fees and taxes. If the basic amount is not fully consumed for the salary and the corresponding fees and taxes, the surplus may be spent on the Rubicon research.

The basic amount is calculated by adjusting the yearly full-time rate of 84,000 euros using the correction coefficients. The yearly rate and the correction coefficients have been adopted from the

Marie Curie Fellowships. The list of correction coefficients can be found on the NWO website: <https://www.nwo.nl/en/money-follows-cooperation> (download file NWO correction coefficients 2024).

No rights may be derived from the amounts mentioned in this document.
The researcher is or will be employed by a knowledge institute in the Kingdom of the Netherlands or enters employment at a foreign host institute. There is no contract of employment with NWO.

*Example: the payment for 12 months in Germany is $84,000 * 0.907 = 76,188$ euros, with an additional $12 * 276$ euros = 3,312 euros for research costs. The amount payable for travel costs is detailed above.*

7.1.2 Standard payment in the Kingdom of the Netherlands

The host institute in the Kingdom of the Netherlands will act as the employer and NWO will pay it a grant of 84,000 euros per 12 months/full time. On top of this the grant includes 276 euros per month for research costs. Travel costs cannot be applied for, unless an applicant in the European part applies for a stay in the Caribbean part of the Kingdom, and vice versa.

NWO will not act as the employer and the regulation “Approval of funding for scientific research 2008” does not apply.

Travel costs

In case you travel from the European part to the Caribbean part, please calculate the distance from Amsterdam to your point of destination in the Caribbean part. In case you travel from the Caribbean part, calculate the distance from your point of departure to Amsterdam. Please see paragraph 7.1.1 for instruction on how to calculate the travel costs

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Visiting address:

Location The Hague

Laan van Nieuw Oost-Indië

2593 CE The Hague

Netherlands

Location Utrecht

Winthontlaan 2

3526 KV Utrecht

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