



NWA Do-ReACT: Further **D**evelopment and **R**egulatory **A**cceptance of **C**hemical **T**est Models

Non-animal testing methods for the safety assessment of chemical substances

Call for proposals

2025



Inhoudsopgave

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1 Introduction

In this Call for proposals information is provided about the application procedure for the “volledige naam Call for proposals” 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

What does the Netherlands want to know? This was the idea behind the creation of the Dutch Research Agenda (Dutch acronym NWA). The NWA has been created by an innovative process with input from scientists and citizens: the Dutch general public was invited to submit questions about science online. This Call of proposals yielded an impressive 11,700 questions about a wide variety of subjects. These were consolidated in 140 big issues, the so-called 'cluster questions'. Around these cluster questions, researchers and societal organisations formed 25 networks that were given the name NWA routes. These networks were given their own route management and, inspired by the cluster questions in the NWA agenda, they develop knowledge agendas and organise meetings and communication activities. The 25 NWA routes and the associated cluster questions can be found via [Routes | NWO](#).

Cooperation between researchers from different disciplines, on the one hand, and knowledge organisations and societal (public and private) organisations, on the other, has added value for the complex issues that are part of the NWA. In these collaborations, new knowledge flows from researcher to user, and new questions from professional practice and from society find a way into new research. In the conviction that people can achieve more together than they can individually, the NWA programme therefore encourages collaboration between different partners.

The key elements of the NWA programme are:

- The Dutch Research Agenda that consists of 25 routes and 140 cluster questions;
- Knowledge-chain-wide¹ and interdisciplinary consortia, in which researchers from different disciplinary backgrounds, knowledge and societal (public and private) organisations and, where relevant, citizens collaborate on complex issues;
- Societal organisations, society and citizens have a clear role in the research;
- Giving back the results to society through dialogue and interaction.

In 2018 the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science (Dutch acronym) OCW entrusted NWO with implementing the Dutch Research Agenda. The NWA comprises four programme lines²:

- a. [Research along Routes by Consortia \(ORC\)](#);
- b. [Thematic Programming in consultation with government bodies](#);
- c. [Innovations and Networks](#);
- d. [Science Communication and Outreach](#).

¹ The broad knowledge chain comprises a diversity of the public knowledge institutions: universities of applied sciences, universities, NWO and KNAW institutes, university medical centres and TO2 institutes.

² More information about the different programme lines is available at [Dutch Research Agenda \(NWA\) | NWO](#).

The Call for proposals 'NWA Do-ReACT' is being realised in the context of programme line 2. In this Call for proposals, the initiators are the Ministries of Infrastructure and Water Management, Agriculture, Fisheries, Food Security and Nature, and Education, Culture and Science..

The NWO Executive Board is the decision-making body of this NWA Call for proposals. The call procedure is managed by ZonMw.

1.2 Available budget

The grant limit for this Call for proposals is €3,440,000. It is expected that a maximum of one application for this Call for proposals will be approved.

1.3 Submission deadlines

When you submit your application in Mijn ZonMw, you will also need to enter some details online. Therefore please start submitting your application at least one week 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 **12 May 2026**, before 14:00:00 CEST.

The deadline for submitting a request for review of organisations established in the Netherlands (see section 3.1.1) is Tuesday 14 April 2026, before 14:00:00 CEST.

The deadline for submitting a request for review of foreign organisations (see section 7.1.1) is Tuesday 14 April 2026, before 14:00:00 CEST.

The collaborative workshops will take place between Wednesday 14 January 2026 and Wednesday 4 February 2026. More information can be found on the funding page of this Call for proposals.

2 Aim

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

2.1 Societal problem

The Netherlands aims to be a pioneer in animal-free innovation. However, chemical safety assessments are still heavily dependent on animal studies. New chemicals, or chemicals used for new applications, may only be introduced to the market once the potential toxic effects and risks to humans and the environment have been assessed. Many stakeholders also still see animal tests as the gold standard in safety research. However, in recent years, it has become increasingly clear that the results of *in vivo* experiments with laboratory animals do not always adequately identify the risks to humans. At the same time, although many new animal-free methods are being developed, these have not yet been adopted for chemical safety assessments.

New Approach Methodologies (NAMs) are innovative technologies that can be used to assess the safety of chemicals by making much less use of animal testing, or even eliminating it entirely. Developing NAMs is not just essential to replace animal testing: some of these methods also provide more information about the toxic mechanisms of action of these substances in humans. Many of these methods also align more closely with the human situation, because they use *in vitro* human-based systems. This can ultimately lead to a better assessment of the safety of chemicals for humans.

Although many NAMs have been developed through the years, and the benefits of NAMs are increasingly recognised, they still see little use for regulatory purposes. This is probably due to the lack of formally validated NAMs and the conservative attitude to the use of alternatives to animal testing in the (chemical) industry and among regulatory bodies. There are still considerable barriers to the adoption of NAMs for decision-making about the safety of chemical compounds. As well as scientific and technical challenges, there are also legal and economic challenges to be overcome. There are also cultural and social factors to consider, such as the preference for tried-and-tested methods. This may explain why animal tests are more likely to be used, despite the ambition to use alternatives. Examples of such tests are included in the [RAT list](#).

This issue has attracted attention from across society and government, and regulators have also expressed a clear ambition to increase the use of NAMs in hazard and risk assessments. For example, the European Chemicals Agency (ECHA) organised the workshop '[Towards an Animal-Free Regulatory System for Industrial Chemicals](#)' in 2023, which included a discussion of how to support the transition to a laboratory animal-free regulatory system for chemical safety assessments. The European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) has developed the '[Roadmap for Action on NAMs](#)', which identifies possible priorities for the adoption of NAMs for food safety risk assessments.

For this to succeed, there is a need for further development and validation of NAMs to narrow the gap between the research phase and implementation. Validation of NAMs is an important requirement before they can be used as standard methods for safety tests in a regulatory context. The OECD plays an important role in the worldwide acceptance of these NAMs.

It is also essential to identify the existing barriers to broad adoption of the studied methods. It is important to understand the playing field of the validation process and the division of roles between organisations to understand, and where possible promote, the implementation of NAMs. It is also crucial to clarify the requirements that must be met for acceptance by all stakeholders, including the industry, government and regulatory bodies, and to understand the ways that participation by the industry in validation processes can be enhanced or simplified. These insights can lead to strategies to achieve faster and more efficient reproduction, replication, validation and acceptance of new methods.

2.2 Aim of the programme

This Call for proposals invites knowledge institutions and civil society organisations to jointly develop research proposals that focus on the theme of this Call for proposals: ‘Laboratory animal-free testing methods for chemical safety assessments’. The consortia must be interdisciplinary and must encompass the entire knowledge chain (see [Collaboration in research | NWO](#)). Research that encompasses the entire knowledge chain means the programme brings together fundamental, applied and practice-oriented research.

For example, a consortium may consist of experts from humanities and social sciences as well as exact sciences, experts in Dutch and/or European legislation, civil society organisations and experts from the industry. Each party in the consortium plays an active role in the project from the start.

The aim of the ‘NWA Do-ReACT’ Call for proposals is to contribute to the validation of existing animal-free methods that identify the hazards and/or risks of exposure to chemicals to humans, animals and the environment. The objective is to promote the acceptance and use of these methods and the results they generate, including for statutory chemical safety assessments.

An important objective of this Call for proposals is to promote research required to validate the use of NAMs for regulatory chemical assessment processes. These NAMs are an alternative to existing animal testing methods. The ultimate goal is to bring these NAMs as close as possible to international regulatory acceptance. The Call for proposals focuses on the validation of animal-free research methods that can be used in hazard and quantitative risk assessments that identify mechanistic aspects responsible for the adverse consequences of the use of chemicals. These include the effects of pesticides, foods and animal feed additives, pharmaceutical ingredients, biocides and industrial chemicals on humans and the environment. The purpose of this research is to increase confidence in the use of these methods and eventually to achieve international acceptance of their use in the statutory risk assessment process.

This Call for proposals is open only to consortia that focus on the further development and optimisation of existing methods. These are methods developed by previous research projects that accumulated knowledge about their feasibility and potential impact. Proposals need not focus exclusively on individual animal-free methods. Combinations of various animal-free methods (test batteries) are also covered by the objective of this Call for proposals.

The Call for proposals is aiming at a single project that encompasses the further development of various methods. This will allow the project to function as a learning community, in which knowledge can be accumulated based on various cases, with opportunities for higher-level research that generates generic insights and recommendations. Obtaining insights into the validation process is thus an explicit part of this Call for proposals. These insights may contribute to the development of new methods that not only increase the probability of successful validation in the future, but also make validation faster and/or cheaper, while ensuring that at least the existing quality level in the validation process is maintained. Sharing the accumulated knowledge can also reduce potential hesitance about the use of validation activities in general.

2.3 Substantive framework

This section contains the definitions of validation and acceptance for this Call for proposals and the regulatory needs. It also explains the ambition to involve regulators and disseminate the project results widely. Important starting principles are also clarified.

2.3.1 Validation and acceptance

In this Call for proposals, validation and acceptance are defined as demonstrating the biological and regulatory relevance, reliability and robustness of the procedure used to answer the question or questions at hand.

Validation includes the following elements:

- **Relevance:** the suitability of a method or combination of methods for answering the regulatory question at hand (in this case the chemical hazard or risk assessment) and the biological relevance of the method or methods. This means methods must adequately reflect the biological processes *in vivo*. This aligns with the enormous progress made in the development of Adverse Outcome Pathways (AOPs). This relevance must be seen in the context of the effects of the use and application of the chemical, or other forms of exposure on people, animals or the environment. For example, if the question at hand concerns exposure of humans, this also determines the context.
- **Reliability:** a method must result in an unambiguous conclusion. How well can the method predict, and how variable is the method? It is also important that there is a clear rationale for the use of the method.
- **Robustness:** the method must be both repeatable (in-experiment repeatability) and reproducible (can be repeated at another time and in another place).

This Call for proposals focuses on methods that assess the hazards and/or risks of exposure to chemicals to humans and the environment. This means the requirements for the precision of the result (the degree of uncertainty) may vary depending on the context (exposure pathway(s), knowledge about the nature of the chemicals to be assessed). The validation process must result in transparently implemented method(s), including the presence of SOPs (Standard Operating Procedures), the development of interpretation procedures, quality control criteria and, where applicable, the implementation of effective controls (blank, positive, negative and reference controls).

Section 2: Aim / NWA Do-ReACT

The OECD Guidance Document on Good In Vitro Method Practices³ includes guidelines that an *in vitro* method (to be validated) must comply with. The OECD Guidance Document 34⁴ also explains the principles that the validation process must follow in that context. Where possible, cooperation with the [EURL ECVAM](#) and [PEPPER](#) in the validation process are recommended.

As regards acceptance, regulatory bodies often refer to at least three elements:

- Regulatory relevance: the information from the method has an application in (future) legislation and regulations. In other words, the method (individually or in combination with other methods) produces information that meets a statutory requirement.
- Confidence in the result (confidence in use): the method must convincingly comply with the validation criteria.
- Understanding the limitations: the area of application of the method.

Adoption should ideally follow acceptance, given that the European animal testing directive ([Directive 2010/63/EU](#)) is based on the ‘no, unless’ principle.

The development of the method into a validated model consists of various steps: determining the regulatory question, devising, testing and optimising (a) method(s) that answer(s) that question, developing an SOP, assessing the robustness, reliability (in various laboratories), the peer review and adapting for use in statutory frameworks. This phase is highly dependent on the time and money that researchers can and are permitted to spend, and on the peers they can approach for the important scientific assessment.

Validating methods requires a clear and well-formulated objective and scientific basis. The associated regulatory question must be clear, because it serves as the basis for the validation process.

Regulatory acceptance also consists of various steps: developing a draft test guideline (TG) in the framework of the OECD Guidelines for the Testing of Chemicals through the OECD Working Group of National Co-ordinators of the TGs programme (WNT), the associated peer review of the TG, the decision to develop it into a formal TG and regulatory acceptance. This process largely takes place within the framework of the formal decision-making processes of the OECD, in which all member states, NGOs and the industry may all comment on the TG. A TG may only be included in legislation once it has been formally agreed. In the European Union, this is organised through the test methods directive ((EC) no. 440/2008). However, before the (new) test method may be used in practice, it is sometimes necessary to amend specific legislation, such as REACH.

In the Netherlands, a candidate OECD TG must be proposed by the OECD WNT [national coordinator](#) at the National Institute for Public Health and the Environment (RIVM). We recommend making contact with the national coordinator at the start of the project.

³ OECD (2018), *Guidance Document on Good In Vitro Method Practices (GIVIMP)*, OECD Series on Testing and Assessment, No. 286, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264304796-en>.

⁴ OECD (2005), *Guidance Document on the Validation and International Acceptance of New or Updated Test Methods for Hazard Assessment*, OECD Series on Testing and Assessment, No. 34, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/e1f1244b-en>.

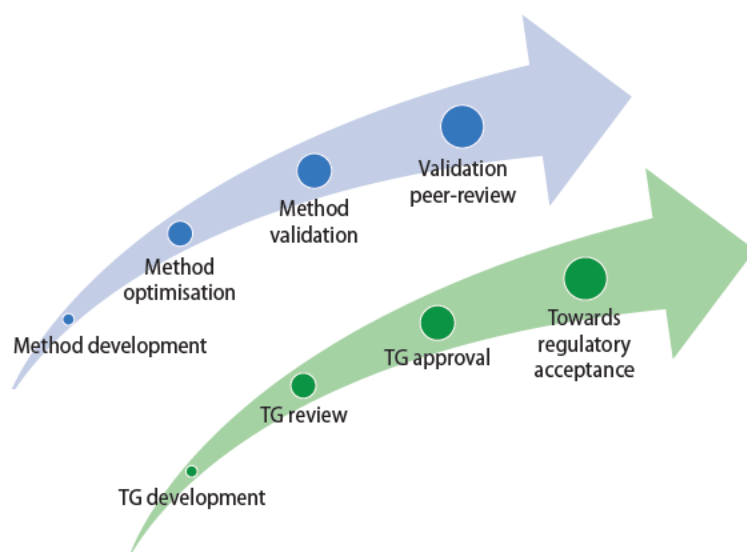


Figure 1. Schematic representation of the process of developing a method into an accepted OECD test guideline, with a clear distinction between the development of the method itself (blue line) and the process of achieving acceptance of the method as an OECD test guideline (TG) and subsequently the regulatory acceptance (green line) (see [Guidelines for the Testing of Chemicals | OECD](#)).

2.3.2 What is the regulatory need?

As mentioned above, safety assessments of chemicals such as pesticides, foods and animal feed additives, pharmaceutical ingredients, biocides and industrial chemicals require toxicological studies to determine whether humans, animals or the environment are adversely affected by exposure. NAMs are already available and have been included in legislation and regulations for specific toxicological studies, including the effects on skin and eyes. However, there are fewer, or no, NAMs available for many other toxicological study types.

Within the EU, ECHA and EFSA have important coordinating and executive tasks in relation to chemicals policy. ECHA's responsibilities include the REACH chemicals legislation, the CLP Directive and the Biocides Directive, and also issuing independent scientific advice to the European Commission about these frameworks. EFSA issues independent scientific advice about food safety throughout the entire food chain, including food safety and animal feed safety, nutrition and pesticides. Both organisations also think strategically about reducing the use of animal testing and using alternative methods, such as NAMs. There are other executive agencies for other areas of application, including medicines and cosmetics.

ECHA

In its recent report 'Key Areas of Regulatory Challenge'⁵, ECHA set out its research requirements, including the replacement of animal testing with alternatives for humans and the environment. According to ECHA, important endpoints for which extensive use is still being made of animal testing include neurotoxicity, immunotoxicity and endocrine disruption. There are no, or only limited, accepted NAMs for these endpoints. Animal tests for these endpoints require many animals for each test. In the transition to increased use of alternatives to animal testing, ECHA sees that attention is primarily being devoted to the development of read-across and NAMs, (*in vitro* and *in silico*) ADME⁶ parameters, the development of kinetic (PBK) models and carcinogenicity. The research requirements cover both full (alternative) tests and test batteries, including for example for the assessment of neurotoxicity (in adults and in the development of children). However, ECHA emphasises that testing for safety assessments cannot be considered in isolation. Ensuring that the evaluation of the toxicology of chemicals meets the statutory requirements also requires classification into hazard classes, as defined in the CLP Directive⁷. Although this classification is primarily based on animal testing, it also permits the use of animal-free methods.

EFSA

In the context of its responsibility for the ongoing development of risk assessment methods, EFSA will continue to follow and integrate scientific developments, with an emphasis on NAM-based methods and reducing animal testing, innovations in food systems, data and technologies, and will strive to meet the requirements set out in the One Health policy. EFSA has included these objectives in its Strategy.⁸ EFSA has had a 'road map' developed for the NAMs in particular.⁹ It includes proposals to develop additional AOPs and AOP networks, advanced cell culture models including organ-on-a-chip, toxicokinetic assessments with a focus on physiologically based kinetic modelling (PBK), the exposome, human sensitivity, data integration and new concepts in human risk assessment.

What does this Call for proposals ask for?

Based on the regulatory needs, as expressed by ECHA and EFSA, this Call for proposals primarily focuses on the transition to increased use of alternatives to animal testing, including NAMs (*in vitro* and *in silico* methods, PBK methods and Quantitative *In Vitro* to *In Vivo* Extrapolation (QIVIVE) methods). Potential endpoints include neurotoxicity, immunotoxicity, endocrine disruption, carcinogenicity, reproductive toxicity, hepatotoxicity, toxicity following repeated exposure and developmental toxicity. Other endpoints are not excluded from the Call for proposals, provided that their relevance is adequately demonstrated.

⁵ ECHA (2024). Key Areas of Regulatory Challenge , ECHA-23-R-08-EN , ISBN: 978-92-9468-381-6 , Cat. Number: ED-05-24-456-EN- N , DOI: 10.2823/858284 , Date: June 2024 , European Chemicals Agency, Helsinki, Finland.

⁶ ADME = Absorption, Distribution, Metabolism and Excretion

⁷ Regulation (EC) No. 1272/2008 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 16 December 2008 on classification, labelling and packaging of substances and mixtures, amending and repealing Directives 67/548/EEC and 1999/45/EC, and amending Regulation No. 1907/2006

⁸ EFSA (2021). EFSA Strategy 2027. Science, Safe food, Sustainability. [Doi:10.2805/422936](https://doi.org/10.2805/422936).

⁹ S.E. Escher, F. Partosch, S. Konzok, P. Jennings, M. Luijten, A. Kienhuis, V. de Leeuw, R. Reuss, K.-M. Lindemann, S. Hougaard Bennekou (2022). Development of a Roadmap for Action on New Approach Methodologies in Risk Assessment. EFSA Supporting publication 2022: EN-7341. [doi:10.2903/sp.efsa.2022.EN-7341](https://doi.org/10.2903/sp.efsa.2022.EN-7341).

2.3.3 Involving regulators

Various national and international organisations and advisory bodies are involved with every phase of the validation process. They can exert influence to promote the validation, acceptance and implementation of NAMs. Cooperation and effective communication between the various stakeholders in the process is essential to ensure that the process is as efficient as possible. When articulating the research question, it is advisable to seek advice from relevant regulatory bodies and to actively involve them immediately after funding is awarded, as it is very important that regulatory bodies are involved with the process from an early stage. This will allow them to give valuable feedback and to amend existing procedures promptly, so that NAMs can be effectively integrated into safety assessments. Early involvement not only simplifies the acceptance of innovative methods, but also contributes to more efficient and transparent decision-making that takes account of scientific progress and the expectations of society.

2.3.4 Scope

This Call for proposals has the following scope, which will be assessed in relation to criteria 1 and 4 (see subsection 4.3):

- The activities in this project must not include experiments on animals, for example to demonstrate the validity of the model. However, the use of existing data from animal testing is permitted and can serve as a comparative base. We encourage participants to avoid the use of animal material as much as possible.
- Projects that focus exclusively on fundamental and applied research (TRL 1-2) are outside the scope of this Call for proposals. The research must focus on the testing, implementing, validating and demonstrating a prototype in a test or operational environment (TRL 3-7, see 7.4 for the definitions of the TRLs).
- It is expected that the development phase of the methods will increase during the duration of the project, and that these methods will be brought as close to regulatory acceptance as possible. The project must strive to achieve OECD acceptance within the duration of the project, or no more than two years thereafter. Cooperation with a national coordinator to develop a test guideline may form part of this process.
- Tests for which good animal-free methods are already included in the OECD test guidelines are also outside the scope of this Call for proposals.
- Methods must have a sound scientific basis. The methods must focus on optimal use of AOPs. A reliable prediction will sometimes require a combination of methods in a defined approach.
- The project must be able to accurately define the chemical domain of application of the method. It is also important that multiple chemical domains are involved.
- The project must also focus on gaining an improved understanding of the validation process by accumulating knowledge about:
 - Whether there are still barriers that impede or slow down scientific acceptance, even for well-validated methods and scientifically relevant models.
 - Identification of research projects: determining what has been promised and what has actually been delivered as regards methods that can be used for various regulations (including perceptions and barriers to acceptance among the general public).
- To what extent do the research results meet the regulatory needs and how can this be communicated optimally?

- The division of roles between the organisations involved with method optimisation and validation, and understanding the roles and mandates of the parties involved with the validation process.
- How can parties from the industry and other stakeholders be encouraged to participate more in regulatory validation processes, and how can this be simplified?
- Which expertise about methods and equipment is required, and how can a realistic and successful assessment of the required capacity be made?
- How are important aspects, such as free availability of IP-protected elements (in accordance with the principles of Findable, Accessible, Interoperable, Reusable (FAIR)), and appropriate data management and a clear data interpretation procedure (DIP) (in accordance with the principles of Fair, Reasonable, And Non-Discriminatory) be included, and what effect do they have on the success of the project?
- We encourage projects to develop strategies to allow the requirements for the final validation to be integrated at an early stage of the methodology development process.

2.3.5 Dissemination

It is essential to disseminate the acquired insights into the validation process to relevant stakeholders to maximise the impact of the project and lower the barrier for validation activities in general. This must occur during the duration of the project and can, for example, be achieved using existing platforms such as the [NAM Navigator](#).

It is also important to ensure the sustainability of the research results, including through the FAIRification of data and by connecting with existing initiatives, such as VHP4Safety and the ASPIS cluster. The data from the project must be actively shared and care must be taken to ensure the long-term availability and reusability of the results for the benefit of the professional field.

2.4 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.

2.4.1 Tailor-made impact

Depending on the aim of the funding instrument, NWO will select the approach that has the greatest chance of achieving 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).

In this programme, the Impact Plan approach is applied. With this, NWO facilitates the development of an integrated strategy that will enable researchers and partners to purposefully increase the likelihood of achieving the desired societal impact.

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](#).

2.4.2 Impact Plan approaches in the NWA

In NWA the programmes focus on complex issues where coordination and cooperation has added value to realise scientific and societal breakthroughs. NWA stimulate the cooperation between different partners, making the whole is greater than the sum of its parts and stimulating that new knowledge for societal issues is developed.

Impact Plan approach

Societal impact is never solely the result of knowledge and insights gained from the research. To increase the chance of the research's societal impact, demonstrable involvement is needed from important stakeholders from the moment the consortium is formed until the completion of the project and beyond. Societal impact is often realised in the years after a research project has been concluded. By ensuring continuous alignment between researchers and possible knowledge users from the start of the research articulation (co-design) and when carrying out the research (co-creation), the chances of productive interactions, and finally impact, will increase.

Consortia draw up an Impact Plan together with stakeholders as part of the proposal. The Impact Plan describes how the consortium expects to realise societal impact and the role that productive interactions play in this. It shows how achieving the expected impact has been integrated into the research design and what role consortium partners and stakeholders from the fields of policy, practice and industry play in this.

2.5 Consortium formation

Research into complex and challenging societal problems requires cooperation between research disciplines, between practice-based and fundamental research and with businesses and civil society organisations. This cooperation occurs within a consortium. NWO and the Netherlands Organisation for Health Research and Development (ZonMw) promote and support the formation of consortia by organising meetings and workshops.

In this Call for proposals, consortium formation is promoted through collaborative workshops. This method is described briefly below. Further details about how NWO promotes consortium formation can be found at [Consortium formation | NWO](#).

2.5.1 Collaborative workshops

The purpose of collaborative workshops is to bring together potential applicants and their ideas, to promote collaboration in broad, innovative consortia and to limit the number of applications. The workshop programme is designed based on the theme or themes of the Call for proposals, the areas of expertise of the participants and their expected contribution to the impact. Two collaborative workshops will be organised. While NWO supports applicants during the process of exploring potential collaborations, it is up to the parties themselves to decide whether, and with whom, they wish to collaborate. During the workshops, ideas will be exchanged, collaboration with other participants in consortia will be explored and initial agreements about the joint development of applications will be made. Following the workshops, the consortia will develop the applications in greater detail. Participation in the collaborative workshop is mandatory for main applicants (see also subsection 3.1).

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

Proposals are to be submitted by the main applicant on behalf of the consortium. The main applicant has participated in both collaborative workshops (see section 2.4.1, 3.3.1 and 4.2.3). If unexpected circumstances prevent attendance, a deputy must be arranged. In such cases, the participant must inform NWO/ZonMw by e-mail (doreact.nwa@zonmw.nl) as soon as possible, and no later than before the start of the workshop.

There are four categories of participants within a consortium:

1. Main applicant;
2. Co-applicant(s);
3. Cooperation partner(s);
4. Co-funder(s) (optional).

A consortium should consist of at least a main applicant, a co-applicant and cooperation partner. The conditions for each type of participant are explained in more detail in the following sections.

Researchers may submit an application as main applicant 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;
- universities of applied sciences as referred to in Article 1.8 of the Higher Education and Scientific Research Act (WHW);
- TO2 institutes;
- National knowledge institutions (*Rijkskennisinstellingen, RKIs*)**¹⁰
- Netherlands Cancer Institute;
- the Max Planck Institute for Psycholinguistics in Nijmegen;
- Naturalis Biodiversity Center;
- Advanced Research Centre for NanoLithography (ARCNL);
- Princess Máxima Center.

* Researchers employed at a university of applied sciences and researchers employed at a TO2 institute may also submit as a main applicant provided that they have at least a salaried position for a limited period of time.

Section 3: Conditions for applicants / NWA Do-ReACT

**** National knowledge institutions may only apply as main applicants after receiving approval from NWO, based on an assessment of the cumulative conditions for recognition as a research organisation. A list of the national knowledge institutions that have already been assessed and approved can be found in annex 7.3.**

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 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.

The main applicant employed by a university of applied sciences, national knowledge institution or TO2 institute whose employment ends before the intended completion date of the project for which the grant is being applied for must also attach such a statement.

Applicants with a part-time contract should guarantee adequate supervision of the project and all project members for whom funding is requested.

Additional conditions (that apply to national knowledge institutions that wish to apply as either main applicants or co-applicants):

- Main applicants may be affiliated with national knowledge institutions that are not listed in annex 7.3, provided that they comply with the following cumulative conditions:
- Co-applicants may be affiliated to the research organisations listed in this section, the research organisations stated in Annex 7.3 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 Netherlands;
- be a foundation, association or an organisation or body established and governed by public law (in Dutch: publiekrechtelijke rechtspersoon) (all other legal forms, including private and public limited companies, are excluded);
- have as its primary goal the independent conduct of its own fundamental research, industrial research or experimental development or with widely disseminating the results of those activities through teaching, publications or knowledge transfer
- 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 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 main or co-applicant. NWO performs this assessment to preclude the granting of prohibited state aid.

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The organisation of the prospective main or co-applicant must provide the following documents no less than 10 working days prior to the submission deadline (meaning no later than **Tuesday 14 April 2026** before 14:00:00 CEST) by email to doreact.nwa@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 statement¹¹;
- the completed Declaration Research organisation, available on funding page of this Call for proposals;
- the documents must be provided in English or Dutch.

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 main or co-applicant.

If the organisation of the intended main or co-applicant within another NWO programme has been assessed against these conditions, please contact NWO in good time via the above email address to determine whether this organisation should be reassessed.

If the organisation of the prospective main or co-applicant does not submit the necessary documents for this assessment in time, NOW/ZonMw cannot accept the organisation as a co-applicant.

If new main or co-applicants are added to the consortium in the proposal and these new main or 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 by email no less than 10 working days before the submission deadline as stated in section 1.3 (meaning no later than **Tuesday 14 April 2026** before 14:00:00 CEST):

- 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 statement¹²;
- the completed Declaration Research organisation, available on funding page of this Call for proposals;
- the documents must be provided in English or Dutch.

3.1.1 Main applicants and co-applicants

Main applicant

The main applicant submits the application using Mijn ZonMw, the electronic submission system of ZonMw. During the assessment process, NWO/ZonMw will communicate with the main applicant. If an application is approved, the main applicant will serve as the project manager and point of contact for NWO/ZonMw. The main applicant's research organisation will be the main beneficiary and coordinator.

¹¹ 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.

¹² 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.

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Additional conditions:

- Main applicants for this Call for proposals may submit only one application as a main applicant.
- Main applicants may also participate in a maximum of one other consortium as co-applicants.

Both main applicants and co-applicants who are employed part-time are responsible for ensuring that the project, and all persons who work on the project and for whom funding is requested, are adequately supported.

Co-applicants

Co-applicants have an active role in the project implementation. The project manager(s) (of the project as a whole or parts thereof) and beneficiary/beneficiaries are collectively responsible for the overall project implementation.

Additional conditions:

- Co-applicants for this Call for proposals may participate in a maximum of two consortia as co-applicants.
- Persons with a zero-hours employment contract may not participate as co-applicants.
- Co-applicants must have at least a master's degree or an equivalent qualification.

Co-applicants affiliated with civil society organisations

This Call for proposals also focuses on knowledge from practice and knowledge with practical applications. Civil society organisations that provide support for, and/or accumulate expertise about, validation and regulatory acceptance of NAMs for chemicals may apply as co-applicants based on the *de minimis* regulation (see below). These organisations include, for example, centres of expertise and stakeholder organisations with practical knowledge, or that carry out research-related activities, that is/are essential to the research process. The application must explain which substantial, active contribution the civil society organisation will make to the research. The assessment committee will assess this based on the consortium quality criterion (see subsection 4.3.1).

De minimis threshold for civil society organisations

Civil society organisations that apply as co-applicants will receive a grant from NWO through the main applicant, taking into account the threshold imposed by the *de minimis* regulation (Regulation (EU) no. 2023/2831 of the European Commission of 13 December 2023). The *de minimis* regulation allows a consortium partner to receive a maximum of €300,000 in *de minimis* aid over a period of three years. Civil society organisations must complete the *de minimis* aid declaration, which confirms that the organisation will not exceed the *de minimis* threshold due to the award of a grant by NWO. If a civil society organisation establishes that receiving a grant from NWO will cause the *de minimis* threshold to be exceeded, the main applicant cannot request a grant for this civil society organisation from NWO. The main applicant must take this into account when preparing the project budget, and must therefore determine whether the requested grant amount will cause the *de minimis* threshold to be exceeded for each civil society organisation that wishes to apply as a co-applicant. The application must include completed *de minimis* declarations for each individual civil society organisation.

3.1.2 Cooperation partners

Cooperation partners are mandatory in this Call for proposals, because active involvement from societal stakeholders is of great importance to share knowledge about challenges and possible solutions. Civil society stakeholders include both public and private organisations, and where relevant, citizens or a representation thereof. The organisation of a civil society stakeholder is not a main or co-applicant or co-financier.

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This means organisations that participate as collaboration partners cannot participate as co-applicants through the *de minimis* regulation.

A cooperation partner is actively involved during the whole process, from the formulation of research questions and development of the project (co-design) to the implementation of the research and/or knowledge utilisation (co-creation). A cooperation partner may be included in the advisory committee.

Please note: no funding may be requested for salary or research costs as a main or co-applicant for personnel of organisations that participate as a cooperation partner in the consortium. However, it is possible to remunerate costs by hiring in these organisations as third parties via the modules 'material costs', 'knowledge utilisation' or 'project management' (see section 3.2 and Annex 7.1).

3.1.3 Co-funders

Co-funding is not compulsory within this Call for proposals. Co-funders are organisations that participate in the consortium and contribute to the project in cash and/or in kind. Co-funders do not receive any funding from NWO. The conditions regarding co-funding are specified in section 3.5.6.

Organisations whose researchers are permitted to act as main applicants in accordance with the description given in section 3.1 may not participate as co-funders in this Call for proposals. An exception will be made for TO2 institutes. They may participate in a consortium as co-funders, unless they also participate as a main applicant or co-applicant in the same consortium.

3.2 What can be applied for

For the project, a grant amount of at most €3.440.000 can be applied for. The maximum duration of the proposed project is 5 year. The applicant and co-applicants can include costs for personnel, equipment, investments and knowledge utilisation. 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 Annex 7.1.

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, Engineering Doctorate, postdoc, physician-researcher, non-scientific personnel (NWP) and for research leave of the applicant(s).

An unrestricted number of positions can be requested for this type of position. Research leave can be requested for up to 20% of the grant amount

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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 and other organisations. An unrestricted number of positions can be requested for this type of position.

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 that are co-applicants.

A maximum of 50% of the grant amount for personnel can be requested for personnel at research organisations abroad.

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 NWO grant amount allocated. Up to 50% of the material budget requested from NWO may be used for third-party work. A maximum of 25% 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.

A maximum of €500,000 can be applied for investments.

3.2.4 Knowledge utilisation

Funding can be requested for activities that promote the use of knowledge from the research¹³, in order to increase the societal impact of the research.

It is mandatory to include an amount for knowledge utilisation. These costs are at least 5% and maximum 20% of the grant amount.

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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).

3.2.5 Project management

It is mandatory to apply an amount for project management. A maximum of 5% of the grant amount can be used for this module.

3.3 Preparing an application

This Call for Proposals consists of two phases:

1. Registration for and participation in the collaborative workshops (mandatory for main applicants);
2. Submitting a proposal

For a complete overview of all submission requirements, see section 3.4.1.

The proposal must be written in English.

A proposal can only be submitted via the online application system Mijn ZonMw. Applications that are not submitted via Mijn ZonMw will not be taken into consideration.

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

- if you do not yet have an Mijn ZonMw account, then you should create this on time to prevent any possible registration problems;
- any new research organisations must also be added to Mijn ZonMw by 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 Mijn ZonMw helpdesk, see contact (Chapter 6).

NWO/ZonMw assumes that the applicant has informed the research organisation where he/she works about the submission of the application and that the research organisation accepts the grant conditions of this Call for proposals.

3.3.1 Registering for and participating in the collaborative workshops

The first phase of this Call for Proposals consists of two consecutive collaborative workshops.

Applications for the collaborative workshops must be submitted using the form on the NWO website. The application must include the expertise of an individual and the contribution that will be made to the desired impact on the theme of the Call for Proposals.

The content of the collaborative workshops will be based on the applications (see also section 4.2.2). The applications containing the participants' expertise will be shared with the workshop participants.

Societal partners are expressly invited to register for the workshops

To respond to this Call for proposals as a main applicant, the intended main applicant (or their deputy) must have taken part in both collaborative workshops. If a participant arranges a deputy, they must inform NWO by e-mail (doreact.nwa@zonmw.nl), preferably one working day before the relevant workshop.

3.3.2 Preparing and submitting a proposal

A proposal is written (and submitted) after the collaborative workshops in which research ideas have been brought together, possible cooperation with other participants in the workshop was explored and where the crucial initial agreements have been made for the joint elaboration of the proposal.

The main applicant (or their deputy) must have taken part in both collaborative workshops.

The steps involved in writing your application are:

- Download the application form from the online application system My ZonMw or from the ZonMw website (on the website of the relevant funding instrument).
- complete the application form;
- save the application form as a PDF file and upload it with any compulsory annexes;
- fill in the requested information online in Mijn ZonMw.

Compulsory annexes:

- budget;
- declarations of commitment of cooperation partners;
- declaration co-funding from co-funders (mandatory if applicable);
- declaration of the de minimis aid (mandatory if applicable, see section 3.1.1)
- letter guaranteeing the continuity of the project supervision (compulsory if applicable, see paragraph 3.1);
- form 'Statement and signature'.

The proposal and annexes should be drawn up according to the NWO templates. Annexes must be uploaded in Mijn ZonMw separately from the application. All of the annexes, except for the budget, must be submitted as PDF files (without encryption). The budget must be submitted in Mijn ZonMw as an Excel file.

If applicable, upon submission of the application, the attached declaration of co-funding should state the full co-funding pledged according to the conditions described in section 3.5.6

Any annexes other than those above-mentioned are not permitted.

3.4 Preparing an application

3.4.1 Formal conditions for submission

NWO 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, 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 main applicant and co-applicant(s) meet the conditions stated in section 3.1;
- in case of co-funding: the co-funders meet the conditions stated in section 3.1.3;
- the application complies with the DORA guidelines as described in section 4.1;
- the application is submitted via the main applicant's ISAAC account;
- the application is received before the deadline;
- the application is written in English;

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- the application budget is drawn according to the terms of this Call for proposals (using the format made available which includes the most recent rates);
- the proposed project had a duration of a maximum of 5 years;
- all of the required annexes, after a possible request for additions or changes, have been completed and submitted completely and in accordance with the terms of this Call for proposals.

Additional conditions for the proposal:

- The main applicant (or their deputy) visited both collaborative workshops of the relevant theme (see sections 3.3.1 and 4.2.1);
- If applicable: Completed declaration of de minimis aid by the relevant social partners;
- If applicable: Following any requests for additional information or amendments, the co-financing has been correctly and fully committed by means of co-financing declarations.

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.

3.5.1 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 \(loketkennisveiligheid.nl\)](#).

3.5.2 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. 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, 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](#).

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 an ethics statement or licence is required for (part of) the research, the project leader must provide a copy of this statement or licence to NWO after the project has been awarded, and in any case no later than before implementation of the part of the project for which the statement is required starts. The part of the project requiring the statement and/or licence can obviously not (yet) be carried out as long as no statement or licence has been provided.

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 Co-funding

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

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 NWO constitutes the required financial resources.

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Co-funding is not compulsory within this Call for proposals. However, co-funders may be included in the application. A distinction is made between co-funding in cash (to be invoiced by the applicant), which serves to cover the budget for the project activities described in the proposal, and in kind co-funding, which can consist of personnel and/or material contributions from the organisations involved

The following principles apply to co-funding:

- NWO 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;
- in-kind contributions will only be accepted under the condition that the portion contributed by the co-funder is integral to the project activities and can be tracked or designated as identifiable effort. In case of questions, NWO may request further justification and evidence of the rates used and also adjustment. In addition, any in-kind contributions in the form of services and know-how may not already be available or in place at the applicant's knowledge institution(s);
- fixed integral hourly rates are used to capitalise the human contribution (work hours) to a project. For rates, see the [Government Tariffs Manual \(HOT\)](#), Table 2 under 2.2 'average total labour costs per pay scale', column 'Hourly rate productive hours, excluding VAT'. The rate closest to the actual labour costs should be used here;
- 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/in kind are¹⁴:

- grant provided by NWO;
- co-funding may not come from parties that according to this Call for proposals can apply for funding to NWO;
- costs related to overhead, guidance, consultancy and/or participation in the supervisory committee.

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. NWO provides a compulsory format for the co-funding declaration on the funding page of this Call for proposals on the NWO website and in ISAAC.

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).

Justification co-funding in cash and in kind

The ratio of co-funding (both in cash and in kind) to the grant provided by NWO 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 NWO because both NWO'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 NWO contribution. For this, NWO assumes the ratio in the application budgets accepted by NWO.

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) NWO'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 NWO. 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 NWO contribution is never more than the original contribution from the grant award. The ratio of the NWO contribution is then at most the contribution that follows from the co-funding requirement.

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

3.5.7 Declaration of support of cooperation partners

In a declaration of support a cooperation partner enounce support for the project and describes their role within the project. NWO will make a form available on the funding page.

In case of awarding funding the cooperation partner must confirm its contribution in the project in the consortium agreement. Further agreements are also made in this agreement between the cooperation partner(s) and the applicant(s) (see also section 5.5)

3.5.8 *De minimis* aid declaration

The *de minimis* aid declaration forms part of the application for civil society organisations that wish to receive funding based on the *de minimis* regulation (see subsection 3.1.1). Acceptance of the application is subject to the condition that the *de minimis* threshold of the relevant civil society organisation is not exceeded at the moment the funding is awarded.

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](#)).

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](#)).

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 referees and members of an assessment committee 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 Fransisco 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 organisations, 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 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 NWO is implementing the principles of DORA, see [DORA | NWO](#).

4.2 Procedure

The application procedure consists of the following steps:

- signing up for the collaborative workshops;
- participation in both collaborative workshops (mandatory for the main applicant or a deputy (see subsection 3.3.1));
- submission of the proposal;
- admissibility of the proposal;
- peer review by referees;

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- rebuttal;
- pre advice assessment committee;
- if necessary: interview selection;
- interview;
- assessment committee meeting;
- decision-making.

Assessment committee

For this Call for proposals, an assessment committee will be appointed by the NWO Executive Board. The assessment committee will have a broad composition. This means that not only scientific expertise will be represented in the assessment committee, but also expertise from the entire knowledge chain, including societal stakeholders who are highly familiar with the subject and representatives from the target group. 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.

4.2.1 Collaborative workshops

The workshop programme will be designed based on the theme of the Call for proposals, the areas of expertise of the participants and their expected contribution to the impact. The workshops offer the opportunity to combine ideas and to form broad, innovative consortia (by joining forces). The participants are responsible for forming partnerships in interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary innovative consortia that encompass the entire knowledge chain and for completing the application together. Further details about the workshops will be published on the funding page. See also [Collaborative workshop | NWO](#).

NWO/ZonMw will organise two successive collaborative workshops.

4.2.2 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 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 Mijn 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.

4.2.3 Admissibility of the proposal

As soon as possible after you have submitted your proposal, you will hear from NWO/ZonMw whether or not your proposal will be taken into consideration. NWO/ZonMw will determine this based on several administrative-technical criteria (see the formal conditions for submission, section 3.4).

NWO/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, NWO/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.

4.2.4 Peer review by referees

Prior to the assessment committee considering your proposal, NWO 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 (section 4.3).

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

4.2.5 Rebuttal

The main applicant subsequently receives the anonymised referee reports. You then have the opportunity to formulate a rebuttal. You will be given five working days to submit your rebuttal via Mijn 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 MijnZonMw. If NWO/ZonMw receives your rebuttal after the deadline, then it will not be included in the rest of the procedure

4.2.6 Pre-advice 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. 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). The pre-advisors also identify which aspects need to be clarified, explained or explored in greater depth during the interview.

4.2.7 Interview selection

In principle, all consortia that submitted a proposal will be invited for an interview by the assessment committee. If the total number of admissible proposals exceeds five times the number of projects that can be funded within the available budget, the assessment committee can decide to invite only a selection of consortia to the interview.

The proposals, the referees' reports and the rebuttal/the pre-advice and the rebuttal will be submitted to the assessment committee. The assessment committee will then make its own assessment based on these documents. Subsequently, the applicants with the highest ranked proposals will be invited for an interview. This will concern a maximum of five times the expected number of applications to be awarded. If, after the interview selection, it appears that two or more applications cannot be distinguished from each other on the basis of their weighted total score, there will be an ex aequo situation (see section 4.2.15).

4.2.8 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, the consortium 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.

4.2.9 Meeting of the assessment committee

The committee will make its own assessment based on the available material. Although the referees' reports will 'guide' the final assessment to a large extent, it will not be blindly accepted without question by the committee. The committee will consider and compare the arguments of the referees (also amongst each other) and examine whether the rebuttal contains a well-formulated response to the critical comments from the referees' reports. Furthermore, the committee, unlike the referees, will assess the quality of all the proposals and rebuttals submitted. Therefore, the committee's assessment may differ from that of the referees.

Following the discussion, the committee draws up a written recommendation addressed to the NWO Executive Board 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 "very good" to be eligible for funding. The proposal must also receive at least the qualification "good" for each of the individual assessment criteria.

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

If, after the discussion of the proposals, two or more of the proposals cannot be distinguished from each other based on their weighted total score, then this will result in an ex aequo situation (see section 4.2.9).

4.2.10 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 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 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 0.10 will be selected. If an ex aequo situation occurs at the borders of the available budget or the selection borders, then with a better assessment pertaining to criterion 'Alignment with the objectives of the programme', will end as the highest. If the ex aequo situation is not resolved with this, then the proposal with the highest score for the criterion 'Quality of the consortium' will end highest. If the proposals subsequently in a tie, 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 provides no resolution either, or is not desirable to vote, the ex aequo situation will be sent on to the decision-making body.

4.2.11 Decision-making

Finally, the NWO Executive 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.

4.2.12 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.

Collaborative workshops

Wednesday 7 January 2026	Deadline registering collaborative workshops*
Wednesday 14 January 2026	Collaborative workshop 1
Wednesday 4 February 2026	Collaborative workshop 2

*Further information about the collaborative workshops can be found on the funding page of this Call for Proposals.

Request assessment of (foreign) organisation(s)

Tuesday 14 April 2026, 14:00:00 CEST	Deadline for submitting a request for assessment of (foreign) organisations
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Proposals

Tuesday 12 May 2026, 14:00:00 CEST	Deadline proposals
Beginning of July 2026	Applicants can submit a rebuttal
Med September 2026*	Interviews + assessment committee meeting
October 2026	Decision by the board

* If interview selection is applied (see 4.2.7), the assessment committee meeting with the interviews will take place at a later date. This meeting is expected to take place at the end of September 2026.

4.3 Criteria

4.3.1 Substantive assessment criteria

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

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

1. Problem definition and analysis (20%)
2. Envisaged impact and route to impact (20%)
3. Quality of the consortium (30%)
4. Quality of the research (30%)

The following specific aspects of the four assessment criteria will be assessed:

Section 4: Assessment procedure / NWA Do-ReACT

1. Problem definition and analysis

- Clearly formulated definition of the problem and resulting knowledge gaps, logically related and contributing to the objective of the Call for proposals (see section 2.3, substantive framework of this Call for proposals)
- Societal and scientific urgency and relevance of the defined problem.
- Interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary character of the problem definition and the knowledge gaps.
- The proposal demonstrates extensive knowledge of existing initiatives in the field of this Call for proposals, and offers clear added value by adopting a distinctively different approach or building on those initiatives.
- The added value of the NAM compared to existing methods of assessing risks to humans, animals and the environment is adequately motivated.

2. Envisaged impact and route to impact

- The envisaged scientific and societal impact is clearly defined and follows logically from the identified problem or question. The consortium sufficiently considered unwanted impact of the research, and how to deal with it.
- The Impact pathway describes a clear route to the societal impact, as well as the role of the partners involved.
- Appropriate strategic activities to achieve the impact, such as stakeholder engagement, communication, monitoring and evaluation, and capacity development.
- 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.

3. Quality of consortium

- The composition of the consortium is a logical fit with the proposed project: interdisciplinary, involvement of relevant societal stakeholders and/or citizens and the wider knowledge chain.
- Complementarity of the consortium partners in terms of the knowledge, skills and expertise required to execute the project.
- Active involvement of the partners in the development of the project (co-design), from the articulation of the problem definition and the knowledge gaps, and in its execution (co-creation). This results in the formation of a (social) network as part of and around the project.
- A clear division of tasks and roles within the consortium with respect to the execution of the research and the governance of the project.
- There is a tangible and feasible plan for the professional development of talented young and mid-career researchers both within and outside of the academic world.

4. Quality of the research

- The scientific research question is a logical response to the problem analysis.
- The scientific research question follows logically from the analysis of the problem and is original and innovative for the disciplines concerned.
- The proposed approach and methodology are suitable for achieving the specified objectives and answering the research question. The consortium employs fundamental, applied and practical research in its approach.
- The integrated character of the interdisciplinary research.
- The structure of the proposed research plan: clearly defined and logically coherent work packages; suitable and well-substantiated budget; convincing feasibility, risk analysis; and, if necessary, a back-up plan.

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 Content monitoring

NWO will assume responsibility for the substantive monitoring of the proposals awarded funding. For the duration of this programme NWO will organise programme meetings. All projects within the theme of this Call for proposals will be invited to participate.

Supervisory committee

To strengthen the monitoring and to increase the support for the realisation of the projects, a supervisory committee will be appointed. The committee will monitor the connection between the different themes, the progress of all projects and the results achieved with a focus on knowledge transfer, knowledge utilisation and the application of the results. After granting, regular follow-up meetings will be organised. Representatives from all consortia will be asked to provide input and to take part in the meetings of the supervisory committee. Whenever that is desirable, additional experts will also be invited to the meetings.

5.2 Accountability and project completion

Accountability during the project

During the project, the main applicant is responsible for reports on the project's progress. With a view to monitoring project progress, NWO may request interim reports on a project's content and finances, as well as an account of co-funding provided. More information about this will follow in the grant award letter.

Project closure

Upon completion of a project, final reports will be requested on both the content and finances of the project. The final amount of funding (and co-funding) will be determined after these final reports have been approved.

5.3 Programme activities

NWO/ZonMw will organise various mandatory meetings throughout the duration of the project. The research programme kick-off will be in 2027, following the grant award process. This kick-off at the programme level will be public and will mark the start of the programme. Members of the winning consortia will take part in the kick-off, which will also be aimed at relevant stakeholders and the wider public.

Annual meetings will take place. Further details about these will be made available in due course. The progress of the project will be discussed during these meetings. Opportunities for (further) communication and activities related to the impact of the project will also be considered.

A mid-term meeting will be organised halfway through the programme. The annual meeting will be extended to include an open day for the general public with relevant stakeholders to draw attention to and collect the (preliminary) insights generated by the projects and the results (and impact, if available). The meeting is also intended to attract greater attention to the research as a contribution to the wider impact.

The closing event will take place in 2032. Depending on the technical and practical circumstances, this meeting will consist of two days or half days with two main activities. The first part, in which the conclusions will be discussed and refined, will occupy one day (or half day). The second part will be a public open day with relevant stakeholders to draw attention to and collect insights from, and results of the project (and impact, if available). It will also attract greater attention to the themes of the Call for proposals as a contribution to the wider impact.

5.4 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, 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](#).

5.5 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 NWO during the time that they work for the research organisation. If an applicant or a researcher funded by NWO 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.

NWO's ambition is that research results can be applied by partners involved in the project. NWO aims that all research results from projects it funds are made publicly accessible while at the same time encouraging parties to further develop the research results by giving them the possibility to exploit these. For the exploitation of results, it can be desirable to transfer intellectual property rights or to license the use of these to (one of) the private parties involved in the project. The basic premise is that all research results can be published with due consideration for agreements made about publication procedures.

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. Uploading in ISAAC is required before the project can start.

The responsibility for arranging the consortium agreement lies with the applicant.

The model agreement that NWO makes available must be used and can be found on the funding page of this Call for proposals. This model agreement has been drawn up in accordance with the NWO Grant Rules 2024.

5.6 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 UMCNL factsheet "[Ten principles for Socially Responsible Licensing | UMCNL](#)".

5.7 Supervisory committee

After the project has been awarded funding, a committee will be appointed in accordance with Article 3.3.2 of the NWO Grant Rules 2024 to supervise and monitor the project. More information about this committee will be provided in the award letter.

5.8 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 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.

Section 5: Obligations for grant recipients / NWA Do-ReACT

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

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

Klaske Bos (programme manager)

Tel: +31703495080

E-mail: doreact.nwa@zonmw.nl

Annelies van Buuren (programme secretary)

Tel: +31703495030

E-mail: doreact.nwa@zonmw.nl

6.1.2 Technical questions relating to the online submission system Mijn ZonMw

For technical questions about the use of Mijn ZonMw, please contact the Mijn ZonMw helpdesk. Please read the manual first before consulting the helpdesk. The Mijn ZonMw helpdesk can be contacted from Monday to Friday between 10:00 and 17:00 hours on +31 (0) 70 349 51 76. However, you can also submit your question by email to servicedesk@zonmw.nl. You will then receive an answer within two working days.

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

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

7 Annexes

7.1 Budget Modules and rates

7.1.1 Personnel

For salary tables and rates: see [Salary tables | NWO](#).

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. 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 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 UMCNL. A one-off personal bench fee of €5,000 is available for each PhD student to stimulate the scientific career.

Engineering Doctorate degree (EngD)

An Engineering Doctorate (EngD) is appointed for a maximum of 24 months for 1.0 FTE. The EngD is employed by the applying research organisation and may, during the research, perform work at an industrial partner for a fixed period of time.¹⁵

Funding for the appointment of an EngD may only be requested for if funding for a PhD student or postdoc is also applied for. It is not possible to apply for funding for an EngD who started the project to be funded before grant is awarded.

Use the rates of a PhD student in the salary tables of UNL and UMCNL. A one-off personal benchfee of €5,000 is available for each EngD to stimulate the scientific career.

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 UMCNL.

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.

¹⁵

More information on EngD positions is available via 4TU.

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 UMCNL salary tables. For each physician-researcher, a one-off personal bench fee of €5,000 is available to stimulate the scientific career.

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 manager. 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 NWO. Depending on the job level, a choice is made from the UNL or UMCNL salary tables for NWP-mbo, NWP-hbo and NWP-academic. No one-off personal benchfee is available for NWP.

Research leave

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 release them from teaching, supervisory, administrative or management duties (not research duties). The applicant may only use the time released 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.

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

Personnel of universities of applied sciences, TO2 institutes, educational institutions and other (research) organisations

Funding may be requested for personnel of universities of applied sciences, TO2 institutes, other educational institutions and other (research) organisations. The rates are determined using the Government Tariff Manual (HOT), Table 2, under 2.2 '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 rate closest to the actual labour costs should be used.

Scientific personnel at a research organisation abroad

Funding may be requested for personnel costs of a foreign research organisation contributing to the project. The foreign research organisation must meet the definition of research organisation as referred to in Article 1.1, paragraphs 4 and 5 of the NWO Grant Rules 2024 and to the cumulative conditions listed under 'conditions foreign research organisation'.

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 of the research'. This substantiation is not necessary when 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.

Conditions foreign research organisation

The organisation must be:

- a foundation, association or body established and governed by public law (in Dutch: *publiekrechtelijke rechtspersoon*), or at least its equivalent in the country of establishment of the foreign organisation (all other legal forms, including private and public limited companies – or at least its equivalent in the country of establishment of the foreign organisation – are excluded);
- be principally engaged in conducting fundamental research, industrial research or experimental development independently or in the broad dissemination of the results of its own research activities through education, publications or knowledge transfer;
- be able to declare that the organisation keeps separate accounts with regard to economic/non-economic activities and that companies with decisive influence on the organisation do not have preferential access to the organisation's research results.

Please note: Prior to submitting an application, NWO will assess, on the basis of the above conditions, whether the foreign organisation complies with Article 1.1, paragraphs 4 and 5 of the NWO Grant Rules 2024 and is therefore eligible to participate as a co-applicant.

NWO carries out this assessment partly to check that there is no question of granting prohibited state aid. This assessment must also be carried out if an organisation has been assessed within another NWO programme and was approved as a co-applicant.

For the purpose of this review, the main applicant will submit the following documents from the foreign research organisation(s) by email to doreact.nwa@zonmw.nl at the latest 10 working days before the submission deadline (i.e. by **14 April 2026** before 14:00:00 CEST):

- a recent extract from the Chamber of Commerce or its equivalent in the country of establishment of the foreign organisation;
- the deed of incorporation and/or current articles of association;
- the latest available annual accounts with an audit report¹⁶;
- a Research Organisation Declaration completed by the foreign organisation, available on the funding page of this Call for proposals;
- the documents must be provided in English or Dutch.

It is permitted to add other relevant documentation. NWO may also request additional information if the above documents are not sufficiently conclusive to determine whether the organisation may act as co-applicant.

If the organisation of the intended co-applicant has been assessed against these conditions within another NWO programme, please contact NWO in time via the above email address to determine whether this organisation should be reassessed.

If the main applicant does not submit the documents required for the condition assessment in time, NWO cannot accept the organisation in question as a co-applicant.

7.1.2 Material

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. Up to 50% of the material budget requested from NWO can be used for work by third parties (e.g. laboratory analyses, data collection, etc.).

Travel expenses (national and international) will only be reimbursed on the basis of second class/economy class fares. For publications, the provisions in Section 5.1.6 Open access apply. Costs for an audit statement can only be claimed for organisation 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 supervisory committee (see section 5.1).

Note: If funding is requested for the above project-specific costs from foreign organisations, these organisations should be assessed before submission in the manner described in section 7.1.1 *Scientific staff at a research organisation abroad*.

¹⁶

Organisations that are not legally obliged to have their annual accounts audited do not have to provide such an audit report. However, they must be able to demonstrate that this legal requirement does not apply to the organisation concerned.

7.1.3 Investments

Funding may be requested for any project-specific resources for research or costs related to construction or further development of scientific infrastructure that retain economic value or can be reused after project completion. The beneficiary acquires ownership of these research resources on completion of the project. In case the beneficiary achieves profits from the beneficial ownership of the research funds, these profits must be invested in primary activities of the beneficiary as referred to in Article 3.1.4, paragraph 2 of the NWO Grant Rules 2024. This includes the purchase of equipment with residual value for the performance of research and investments in the construction or (further) development of scientific infrastructure. Personnel costs as part of the investment can be recorded as personnel costs.

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 Knowledge utilisation

The budget requested should be adequately specified in the proposal. To determine the rates, use the provisions of the budget modules Personnel (7.1.1) and Material (7.1.2).

Impact Plan approach

It is obligatory to make use of this module when preparing a proposal and use a minimum of 5%, to a maximum of 20% of the grant amount for this module.

Within this module, the project budget includes at least costs for the following activities:

- Specific activities to promote knowledge utilisation to (intermediary) parties not funded in the project, such as knowledge platforms. These activities include joint learning activities, training and communication activities;
- Involving stakeholders: activities organised by the consortium aimed at involving stakeholders, such as consultation workshops, expert meetings, round table meetings, etc.;

- Communication: activities organised by the consortium such as (international) learning events, development of videos, blogs, newsletters and other media expressions. Hiring communication expertise may also fall under this;
- Skills development: Activities aimed at developing skills beyond the levels of individual students, PhDs or postdocs, such as developing courses for stakeholders or master's students;
- Monitoring and evaluation moments in which knowledge utilisation is the subject of discussion: such as, for example, mid-term evaluations and committee meetings.

Note: If funding is requested for the above project-specific costs from foreign organisations, these organisations should be assessed before submission in the manner described in section 7.1.1 *Scientific staff at a research organisation abroad*.

7.1.5 Project management

The Project management module offers the opportunity to request a project management post up to a maximum of 5% of the grant amount. The main applicant must adequately justify this post.

Project management includes the following: optimising the organisational structure of the consortium, supporting the consortium and the main applicant, safeguarding the coherence, progress and unity of the project, and coordinating between the sub-projects within the project. These tasks may also be carried out by external parties if they are not available within the main applicant's knowledge institution. Research organisations should take account of public procurement rules in the tender procedure for selecting a third party and, where appropriate, follow a European procurement procedure. The activities of main applicants and co-applicants themselves in relation to the project or project management may not be funded under this budget module.

The budget to be requested for project management can consist of material or implementation costs and personnel costs. For personnel costs, a maximum rate of € 121 per hour can be claimed. The hourly rate of personnel to be appointed must be based on a cost-covering rate and is calculated on the basis of the standard productive number of hours used by the organisation. The cost-covering rate includes:

- (average) gross salary corresponding to the position of the employee who will contribute to the project (based on the collective labour agreement grade of the employee concerned);
- holiday allowance and 13th month (if applicable in the relevant collective labour agreement) in proportion to the FTE deployed;
- social security charges;
- pension costs;
- overheads.

Project management tasks may be carried out by external parties, but the part of (commercial) hourly rates that exceeds the rates stated is not eligible for funding and therefore cannot be included in the budget.

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 (UMCNL) 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.

7.3 Research organisations

The national knowledge institutions listed below may participate in a consortium as main applicants. The assessment as described in subsection 3.1.1 is **not** necessary for these organisations.

1. KNMI - Royal Netherlands Meteorological Institute
2. RIVM - National Institute for Public Health and the Environment
3. CBS - Statistics Netherlands

De hieronder genoemde onderzoeksorganisaties mogen als medeaanvrager optreden in een consortium. De toetsing zoals vermeld in paragraaf 3.1.1 is voor deze organisaties **niet** nodig.

1. IHE Delft Institute for Water Education
2. Waag Futurelab
3. SWOV - Instituut voor Wetenschappelijk Onderzoek Verkeersveiligheid
4. IMEC-NL
5. Nivel
6. NLDA - Nederlandse Defensie Academie
7. AMS Institute
8. Trimbos instituut
9. AMS Institute - Amsterdam Institute for Advanced Metropolitan Solutions
10. BPRC - Biomedical Primate Research Centre

7.4 Definitions of Technology Readiness Levels

This Call for proposals focuses on specific phases of innovation and product development of animal-free models for regulatory testing of chemicals, namely Technology Readiness Levels (TRLs) 3-7. The TRLs indicate the level of development of a technology. The TRL definitions employed by the Netherlands Enterprise Agency (RVO) are used for these specific phases.

Discovery phase: TRLs 1, 2 and 3

Level 1: Fundamental research

You study your innovative idea and the basic principles of the innovation. This involves fundamental research and desk research.

Level 2: Applied research

You now formulate the technological concept and practical applications. In this phase, you primarily carry out experimental and/or analytical research.

Level 3: Testing (proof of principle/proof of concept)

You study the applicability of the concept on an experimental basis (experimental proof of concept). You test and validate hypotheses for various components of the concept.

Development phase: TRLs 4, 5 and 6

Level 4: Implementation and testing of prototype

You test the proof of concept of your innovation at the lab scale. A prototype that you develop in this phase will cost relatively little time and money, and will thus be far removed from a final product, process or service.

Level 5: Validation of prototype

You study the functioning of the technological concept in a relevant environment. This is the first step in the demonstration of the technology. A prototype that you develop in this phase will cost a relatively large amount of time and money, and will not be far removed from the final product or system.

Level 6: Demonstration of prototype in test environment

You extensively test the concept and demonstrate it in a relevant test environment. The testing takes place following the technical validation in a relevant (pilot) environment, such as a test facility. The concept provides insights about the functioning of all components together.

Demonstration phase: TRLs 7 and 8

Level 7: Demonstration of prototype in operational environment

You test the concept and demonstrate it in a user environment to prove that it works in an operational environment. The demonstration of the concept in a practical environment generates new insights for the final market introduction of your innovation.

Level 8: Product/service is complete and operational

In this phase, your innovation reaches its definitive form. You have tested its technological functioning and it has been proven that it complies with the specified expectations, qualifications and standards (certification). You also determine the financial frameworks for (mass) production and launch and prepare for the next step.

Deployment phase: TRL 9

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Level 9: Introducing the product/service/process to the market

Your innovation is technically and commercially complete, ready for production and can be launched in the desired market environment. Now that the overall development process has been completed, you know how to promote your product to the desired target group in the right market.

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